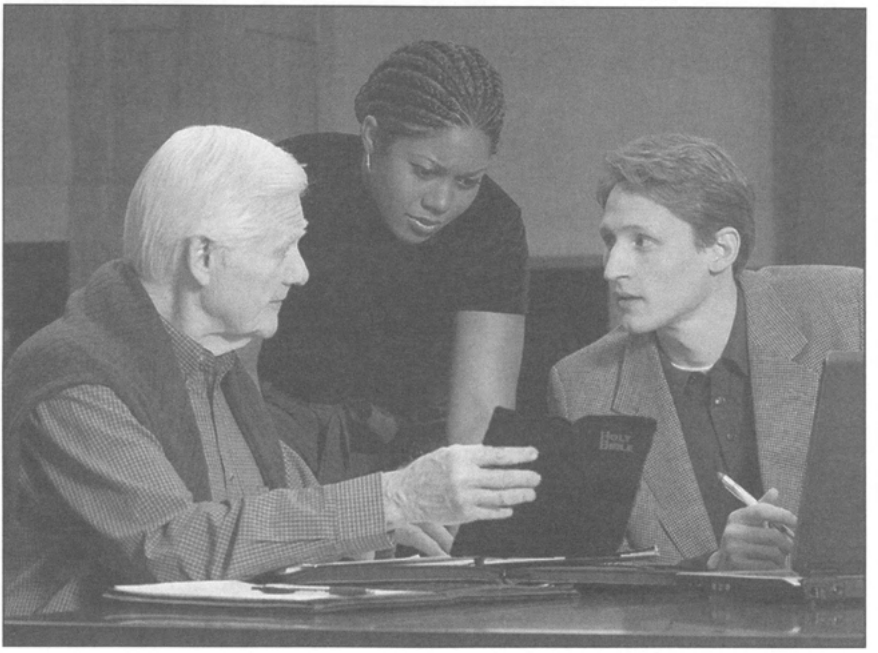

A READY ANSWER FOR EVERY MAN

VOLUME TWO

J. C. Choate

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Dedication

There are many special people to whom I might dedicate this second volume of **A Ready Answer**, but my choice is all the sincere souls who are looking for answers to their biblical questions, who have not yet found the truth concerning the Gospel and the Lord's church. May you read with open minds, ready to accept God's word as the guide for your life, regardless of how many around you may stand in opposition. I pray for your strength, that you will obey God and will then lead others to a knowledge of the one truth that our Lord brought to this broken world.

Publisher's Statement

When J.C. came to Winona in 1952 to conduct a Gospel meeting with the local church of Christ, he was in the process of writing his first book, **Sermon Outlines.** As a 12-year-old in a small congregation, I managed to convince five or six of the brothers that they needed to buy the new book when it came from the press! I could not know then that writing and printing would play such an important role in our life together through subsequent years.

Actually, I have not kept up with numbers on how many books J.C. wrote and printed (or even of mine!), but that part of our work mushroomed through the years. When we began working overseas in Pakistan, first, then in Sri Lanka, and finally in India, J.C. immediately recognized the need for printed materials there — monthly magazines, study books, tracts, and Bible correspondence courses. With the development of radio programs and, then, TV programs in five of the major languages of India, the demand for printed materials increased. He also added South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, and some African nations to the list of places where he agreed to print needed materials.

In 1994, our quarterly magazine, ***The Voice of Truth International***, was begun. Volume 96 was delivered to the office in June of 2018. It is now printed in color in India, circulated there and in neighboring countries from India; printed in Ghana and Nigeria and shared from those countries with their neighbors; and from our office in Winona we send boxes to 60 nations of the world. It is also printed in India in Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Malayalam, Paite, and Marathi.

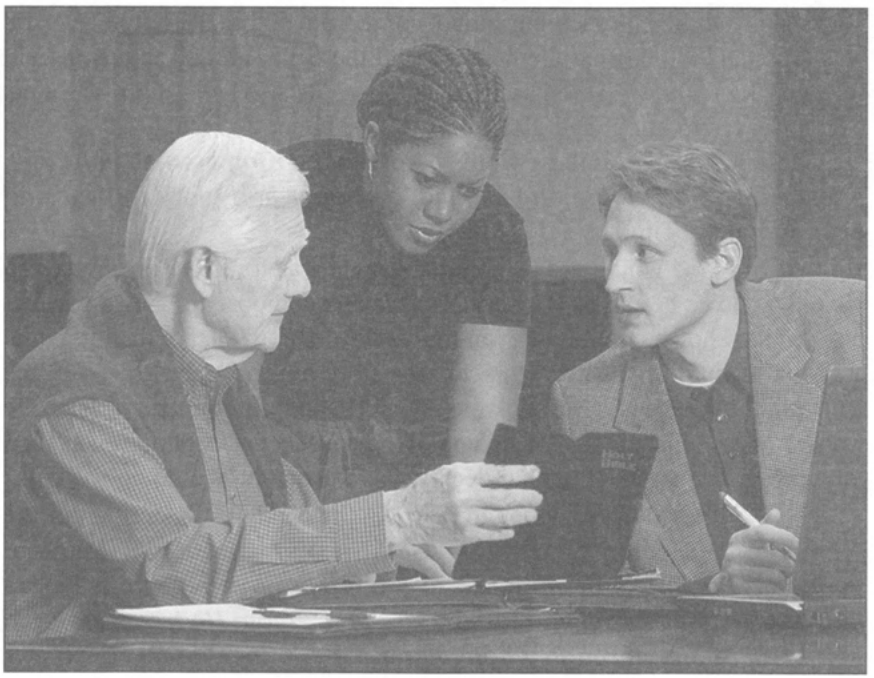
Tri-fold, full-color, pocket-sized tracts were added to the list of tools, with 120 titles now on hand. Approximately 250 titles of books have been printed in the US and are shipped from our Winona office to bookstores, churches, and individuals throughout the States. "World evangelism Publications" is not actually a "business" but is a means to an end: J.C.'s rule was to print enough copies of a title to pay the printer [never be in debt to printers], and then you will have books to give away. Each year, we ship thousands of pounds of our books to various countries overseas, free of charge. Sharing the true Gospel is our reason for existence.

J.C. was a prolific writer, and not everything he wrote has been printed. **A Ready Answer for Every Man, Volumes 1 and 2** fall into that category. I am glad that he is still teaching through these new offerings.

Betty Burton Choate, Winona, MS, May 12, 2018

CONTENTS

1. Does God Speak to Man Today? 9
2. Which Law Is Binding Today? 13
3. Will the Lord Hear a Sinner's Prayer? 17
4. Can We Understand the Bible Alike? 22
5. Is Sin Inherited? 27
6. Can One Be Saved by Living a Good Moral Life? 32
7. Does "Faith Only" Save? 37
8. Are There Many Ways to Heaven? 42
9. What Must One Do to Be Saved? 47
10. Is Baptism Essential to Salvation? 52
11. Is Sprinkling Baptism? 57
12. What About the Thief on the Cross? 61
13. Can One Be Saved Outside the Church? 65
14. Is the Conscience a Safe Guide? 70
15. Does the Bible Teach Foreordained Predestination? 75
16. Can a Child of God So Sin As to Finally Be Lost? 80
17. Does It Matter How You Worship? 85
18. Are Miracles Being Performed Today? 90
19. Why Must Men Suffer? 95
20. Has the Lord Revealed the Time of His Second Coming? ... 100



Chapter 1

Does God Speak To Man Today?

The Bible contains both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Bible, then, is the complete word of God and contains all of the Holy Scripture as spoken by God. The Old Testament was God's word to His people before the death of Christ. The New Testament is God's word for His people after the death of Christ. A Testament is a covenant or will. God gave the first one to His people many years ago through Moses, then He gave His people a new will, sealed with the blood of His Son. When He did that, the first will became old, and that is why we refer to it as "the Old Testament". It is the New Testament, or will, that tells you how to be saved, how to live, and how to go to heaven.

With the foregoing thoughts in mind, you may well ask the question, "Does God speak to man today?" The answer to that question is YES. First of all, we are assuming that God exists. That is not difficult to do when you stop to consider all that exists serves as a testimony to God's existence and

His creative ability. Something cannot come from nothing. Therefore, there was God, and He created the heavens and the earth, and all things therein (Genesis 1:1). But with God's creation of man, He also had a purpose for his being. It was to honor and glorify his Maker (Genesis 1:26,27,31). In the New Testament we read these words, ***"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen"*** (1 Timothy 1:17).

But God would not be honored if man was forced to obey Him, so He put a choice before us (Genesis 3). We could choose to obey, or to disobey. That choice continues, even to this day. But to enable man to make a wise decision, it was necessary to set before him both the good and the evil. On the one hand, God spoke to reveal His will for humanity. Then He warned of the other side — of sin and of the consequences of it. It was then left up to man to make the final decision as to what he would do.

God has always spoken to man. In the New Testament part of the scriptures, the Hebrew writer said, ***"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds"*** (Hebrews 1:1,2). This portion of God's word says a lot. First, it tells us that God has spoken at different times, in different ways. Second, it states that God has spoken in the past, and in the last days. In the past, as represented by the Old Testament, He spoke directly to the fathers, or the heads of the households, and they passed His word on to their families. An example of this was God speaking to Noah, Abraham, and others of that time. Then later God spoke to the people through the prophets like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many others. By this time His word was being written down so that people could go to it and read it at any time.

Then finally God spoke to man through His Son, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the pages of the New Testament. In the presence of Christ and His disciples, God spoke from heaven to say, ***"... This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"*** (Matthew 17:5). The Apostle John, one of the close disciples of Christ, said, ***"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"*** (John 1:17). Christ Himself said, ***"And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me,***

and does not receive My words, has that which judges him, the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak" (John 12:47-50).

Now what do we have? We are told that God has always spoken to man. He has never left humanity in darkness, not knowing what to do. Rather, he has spoken to reveal His will and to enable us to make wise decisions. During the age *before* Christ, God had made a covenant with the nation of Israel, called "the law of Moses". According to Galatians 3:19,24,25, ***"What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made ... Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."***

So God gave a new covenant that was designed to bring the world to the time when He would send His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross to take out of the way that first covenant and, thus, to give a new testament. We read, ***"Then He said, Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God. He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"*** (Hebrews 10:9,10). From this you can see that Christ offered Himself, that is, He gave His life on the cross to take away the first covenant, to bring into force the second covenant which we call the "New Testament".

When the matter comes up concerning whether or not God speaks to man today, many are thinking in terms of God speaking directly and audibly to us. Even though we have the written will of God in the form of the New Testament, still there are those who contend that, separate and apart from that, God speaks in an audible voice through a vision, a dream, or through some other means, but the Bible does not teach this.

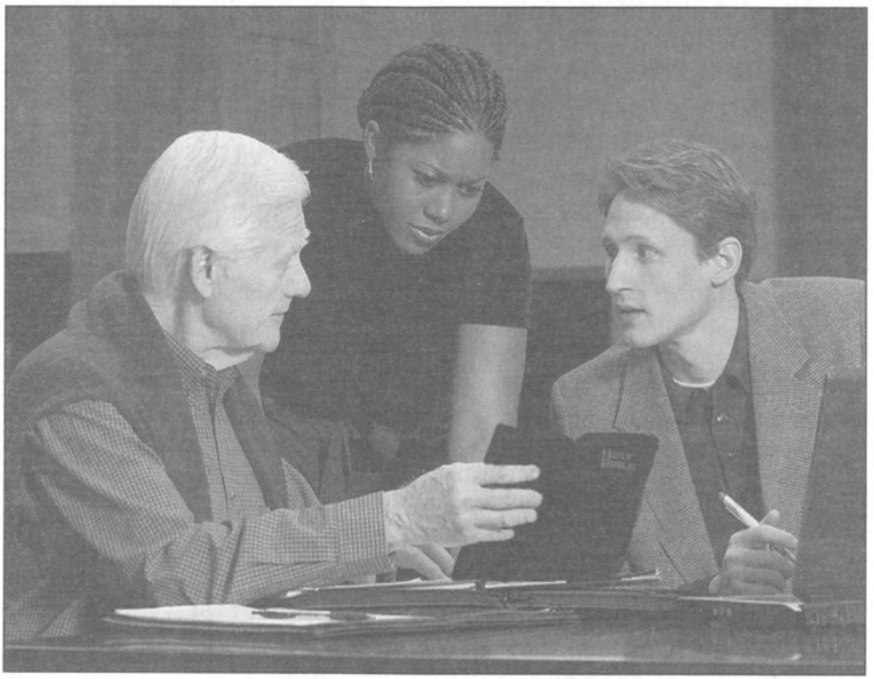
In summing all of this up, let's make these points clear: God speaks today; He speaks through His Son; and Christ speaks through the written word. That word is recorded in the pages of the New Testament. Therefore, when we read the revealed word in the New Testament, God is speaking to us. His word is spirit and life, ***"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul***

and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). It is the truth, ***"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth"*** (John 17:17). It will live and abide forever (1 Peter 1:23). In the end we will be judged by it (John 12:48).

What God says, therefore, must be left as it is. We cannot add to it, subtract from it, or change it in any way, ***"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"*** (Revelation 22:18,19). He has revealed all of His will to man. He has said all that He wanted to say. Had He desired to say more, He would have done so. Therefore, for anyone to say that God has revealed some new message to him, he is deceived and he is attempting to deceive others.

God has spoken, and all have access to the same word in the pages of the New Testament, that portion of the Bible which deals specifically with man today. When we go to it, read it, and study it we are made aware of God's will for us. He speaks to all of us in the same way, and has the same message for the entire world. He tells us of our sin, of Christ who died for us, and of the salvation that we can have through Him. In response, we must **believe in God** and **believe in Christ as His Son.** ***"Without faith it is impossible to please Him"*** (Hebrews 11:6). He would have us to **repent of our sins** or to turn away from all that is bad and wrong. We are told that we must repent or perish (Luke 13:3). Then we are asked to **confess Christ as the Son of God.** We are promised that if we will do that, Christ will confess us to His Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32). Finally, we are asked to **be baptized for the remission of our sins** (Acts 2:38). Christ Himself said, ***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"*** (Mark 16:16). Do you believe that? Will you obey the Lord? If you will, He will save you and add you to His family, the church of Christ that we read about in God's word (Acts 2:47; Romans 16:16).

God speaks and reveals His will to man today. He tells man not only how to be saved, but how to live the Christian life, how to worship, and how to prepare for heaven. You are invited and encouraged to read and study His word for yourself that you might enjoy all of the good things that He has in store for those who obey Him.



Chapter 2

Which Law Is Binding Today?

In these studies together we are attempting to go to the Bible to see what it teaches. The Bible as the word of God. We want you to know what it says, and it is our prayer that you will come to believe it and to obey it.

There is a God in heaven, and He speaks to man today. He speaks through His Son, Jesus Christ, and His word is recorded in the pages of the Bible. But the Bible is divided into two major books, covenants, wills, or laws. One is called the Old Testament, and the other is called the New Testament. What is their significance? Are both binding today? Or, is just one of them binding? If only one is binding, then which one?

I want to point out to you that all of the Bible is the word of God. This includes both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It should be read and studied from the beginning to end. The Old Testament tells the story of the creation, of the beginning of man, of the "Patriarchal Age"

when God dealt with the fathers of households. It tells of the history of the Jews, and of the law and the prophets. The New Testament gives four accounts of the life of Christ, of His death, burial, and resurrection, and of His ascension to the Father in heaven. It tells of the beginning of the church, and of its spreading throughout the world. But this brings us to the question once again: are both of these testaments binding today as a law, or is only one of them in force? If so, which one must we follow?

Although all of the Bible is the word of God, the fact remains that the Old Testament portion is no longer binding as a law. This will become obvious to anyone who honestly studies its content. For instance, God has not commanded us to build an ark, to offer animal sacrifices, to go to Jerusalem once a year for worship, to give tithes, and hundreds of other things that He commanded those who lived during the time in which the Old Testament was binding. Those who lived then, back before the death of Christ, were to keep that law because it was directed to them.

However, we are not living in that period of time and so that law is not binding on us. Paul says that it merely serves as an example: ***"Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted...Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come"*** (1 Corinthians 10:6,11). ***"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"*** (Romans 15:4). So the writings of the Old Testament were written and preserved for our learning, to serve as an example, that we should not do the things that they did that were wrong. As Paul said to the Romans, ***"Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God; on those who fell, severity, but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off"*** (Romans 11:22).

When we say that the Old Testament is no longer binding, some want to use this as an excuse to say that we do not believe that this portion of the scripture is the word of God. Of course that is not true. It ***is*** the word of God, and it contains many wonderful teachings and principles that we need to learn and apply to our lives. These teachings are in the form of example and lessons, but not as laws and commandments that are binding on us today.

Because of the Ten Commandments found in the Law of Moses, there are those who would tell us that unless we teach that the Law of Moses is binding we are encouraging murder, adultery, and other moral evils. But we need to realize that those moral "laws" are actually statements of moral "truths". Even before the "Ten Commandments" were stated in the Law of Moses, those things were wrong, and they continue to be wrong, even under the law of Christ. The difference is that, in the New Testament, not only are the overt sins condemned but there is condemnation also of the thoughts of the heart that would result in committing the sins.

As far as the Law of Moses is concerned, including both the ceremonial and moral portions of it, which included the Ten Commandments, it was never directed to those of us living today. It was not divided into ceremonial and moral portions, but the entirety was the Law of Moses, and to keep part of it was to keep all of it. Even James, one of the writers of the New Testament said, in speaking of the Law of Moses, ***"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all"*** (James 2:10).

But I repeat: the Law of Moses — and that means all of it — was never given to you and me and the people of our time, but rather it was originally given to the Jews, and specifically to those who were led out of the land of bondage. In speaking of this very law, we read, ***"And Moses called all Israel, and said to them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive"*** (Deuteronomy 5:1-3). Then he goes on to list the Ten Commandments, and chapter after chapter of additional commands. As you can plainly see, these words were specifically given to the people of Israel, and to no one else.

Let me illustrate this point to you. Suppose you had a law here in our country that said that every citizen had to give 100 dollars each year to the government as some form of tax. Then suppose someone led a campaign to change the law and to reduce that tax to 50 dollars each year. Now who would want to go back to the former law? Even if they wanted to, they couldn't. Why? Because the new law blots out the former one on that particular point. This could be illustrated again and again in many ways. But the fact is, God gave His people a law, and then He gave a new one. When He gave the new law, that automatically removed the former law.

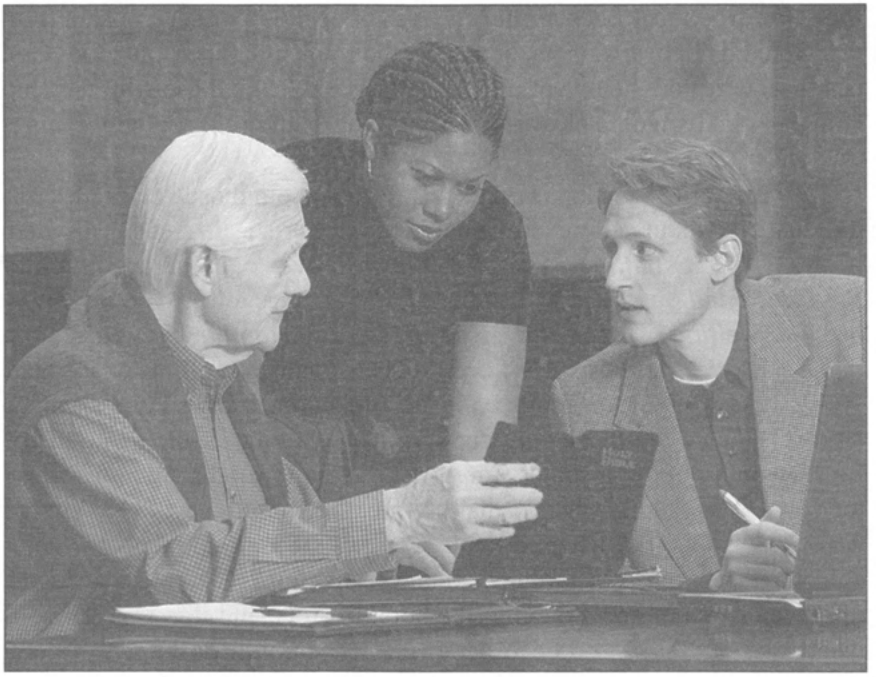
Even before the new law was given, Jeremiah had prophesied, ***"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brothers, saying, Know the Lord, for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more"*** (Jeremiah 31:31-34). In speaking of the new law, the Hebrew writer quotes the prophecy that Jeremiah had made, and he shows that the new law is now in effect, through the death of Christ (Hebrews 8:7-13).

The Hebrew writer also shows that with the giving of the New Testament, the first covenant was taken away, and of course, it was Christ who took it away when He died on the cross (Hebrews 9:16,17).

The Lord said that He did not come to ***destroy*** the law but to ***fulfill*** it (Matthew 5:17,18). When Jesus was at the point of death, He said, ***"It is finished, and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost."*** In saying this, He was signifying that His work of fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament was completed, and that the Old Covenant would cease to exist as a law. Paul wrote, ***"...having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross"*** (Colossians 2:14). Therefore, John could say, ***"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"*** (John 1:17).

Again we read in 2 Corinthians 3 where Paul contrasts the law of Christ with the law of Moses, and he shows the law of Christ was superior in every way. The Hebrew writer declared that God speaks today through Christ (Hebrews 1:1,2), and that His law is the law of liberty (James 1:25).

We return now to the question we asked earlier: Which law is binding today? It is the law of Christ, as set forth in the New Testament. Christ died for us, is our Saviour, has all power and authority in heaven and in earth, and therefore we are to obey His teachings. We are bound to no other law.



Chapter 3

Will God Hear a Sinner's Prayer?

Now let us consider the often-asked question, "Will the Lord hear a sinner's prayer?" This question is usually asked by those who believe that a sinner may be saved by praying to God for the forgiveness of his sins. Does the Bible teach this?

In John 9 we have the story the Lord healing a blind man. On being questioned by those who did not believe in Christ, the man said, among other things, ***"Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, He hears him"*** (John 9:31). Some would argue that this was the thinking of an ignorant blind man, and they would therefore reject what he said. However, at the time he made the statement Christ had already healed him and he was testifying to the fact that Christ was not a sinner but was who He claimed to be — a Messenger sent from God. His pronuncement, ***"Now we know***

that God does not hear sinners," was understood in general as a truth that God did not hear sinners, or answer their prayers. Then who does God hear? The healed man went on to say that God hears those who worship Him and do His will, a clear referenceto God's children. Certainly this is true under the law of Christ.

Next, the question is asked, "But what about those verses of scripture that talk about calling on the name of the Lord, as in Acts 2:21 where it says, ***"And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved"***? In Acts 22:16 Saul was told, ***"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away yours sins, calling on the name of the Lord."*** Then finally, let's turn to Romans 10:13. It says, ***"For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*** There are those who are sure that "calling on the name of the Lord" would refer to a sinner simply asking the Lord, through prayer, for the forgiveness of his sins. If that be true, then surely all of God's word will support this, but where do you ever read of a group of people gathered for the purpose of praying for their salvation? There are accounts of eleven cases of conversion in the book of Acts, and it is very obvious what each one did in order to be saved. If you will go back to Acts 2 where the *prophecy* was quoted that it would come to pass that ***"whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved"*** you will note that in the same chapter the Gospel of Christ was preached, and those who believed asked what they should do to be saved. They were told to **repent** and to be **baptized** for the remission of their sins, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Some three thousand were baptized, and the Lord added the saved to His church. Where does it say that they had a prayer meeting? Where does it say that they prayed to the Lord for the remission of their sins? Nowhere! Then how was the *prophecy* fulfilled on that day, that it would come to pass that whosoever called on the name of the Lord would be saved? The answer is simple. They called on the Lord to save them through their obedience. **The Gospel was preached to them and through their obedience they were asking the Lord to honor His promise to save them!**

Likewise, when we go to Acts 9 and Acts 22 to read of the conversion of Saul, later called Paul, we find that the Lord appeared to him, and Saul asked what he should do. The Lord did not tell him what to do to be

saved but instructed him to go into the city and there it would be told him what he should do. The record goes on to say that Saul remained there for three days, praying and fasting. But still he was not saved. Why? He was sincerely praying and fasting. Surely if one could be saved by prayer, then Saul should have been saved. Still he was **not** saved. Then Ananias, a Gospel preacher, was sent to him. And what did he do on meeting Saul? Did he suggest more prayer? The record says that he asked, ***"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."*** What did he mean by this? He was telling Saul that he should immediately obey the Lord. Saul was already a believer, he was sorry for his sins, and had repented of them, and he had acknowledged Christ as Lord. Therefore, Ananias told him that what he had yet to do was to be baptized.

Perhaps, even then, Saul was kneeling in prayer or maybe he was lying prostrated on the floor, humbled before the Lord. No doubt he was weak from fasting. But Ananias told him to get up and be baptized, so that his sins might be washed away. Why would he tell him that? Because the Lord had said that one must believe and be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16). Now, if Saul was already saved because of his prayers and had already been forgiven of his sins — as those who teach that "calling on the name of the Lord" in prayer will accomplish — why didn't Ananias know that? Why did he, instead, tell Saul to get up and be baptized to wash away his sins?

But how can baptism wash away sins? Baptism *only* cannot, but when one believes in the Lord, repents of his sins, confesses Christ as the Son of God, and is buried in the waters of baptism to have his sins washed away, then because he is obeying the commands of the Gospel, the Lord takes note of his obedience and forgives him. The idea here is that in the waters of baptism one reaches the benefits of the death of Christ, the blood of Christ, and therefore his sins are washed away. But who has tied baptism and the blood of Christ together, with the result of having one's sins forgiven? The Lord Himself did this. Read Romans 6. Again, when Saul complied with Christ's conditions of pardon, through his obedience he was calling on the Lord to honor His promise to wash away his sins. And so it was done.

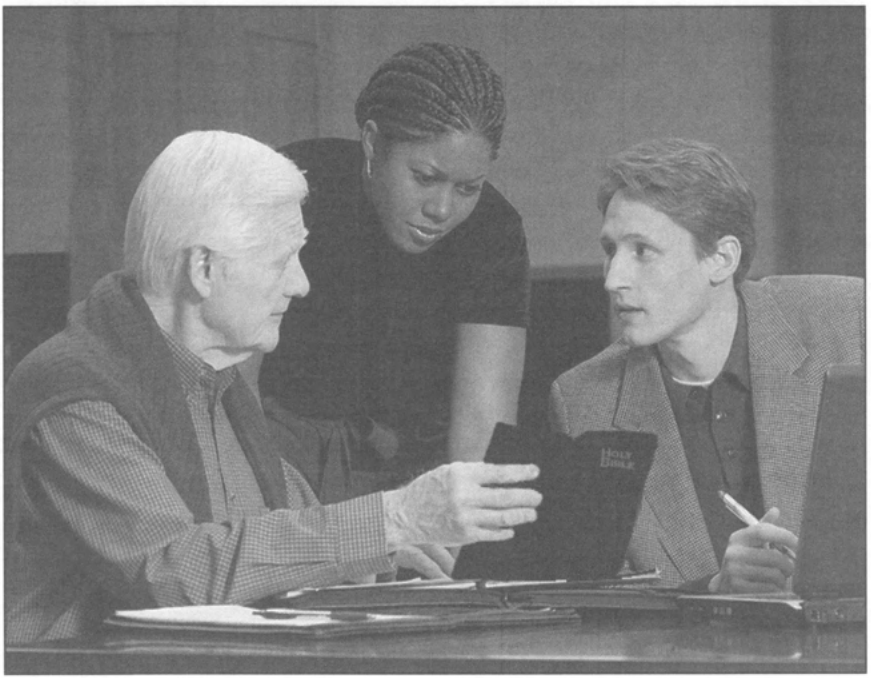
In Romans 10:13 Paul says, ***"For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*** Observe closely the verses following: ***"How***

then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:14,15). Here Paul says that if one will call upon the name of the Lord, he will be saved, but then he says that before a person can *call on the Lord,* he must *believe*, but that he cannot believe unless he has *heard*, and he cannot hear without a preacher, and the preacher cannot preach unless he has been sent. But what is the preacher going to preach? The Gospel. What is the Gospel? Jesus said in Mark 16:15,16, ***"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*** So the Gospel is the *good news* that Christ died for the sins of man, that He was buried, and that He was resurrected from the grave. The *commands* of the Gospel are to believe and be baptized in order to be saved.

As already stated, Paul said, ***"For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*** What does that statement mean in the light of the whole message of the Gospel? It means that **when one believes in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and then is willing to be baptized, *through his obedience he is calling on the Lord* to honor His promise to save him.** Nowhere do the Scriptures teach a contradictory doctrine that one person can be saved through merely praying for the forgiveness of his sins, while another is saved by believing and being baptized in obedience to the commands recorded in Mark 16:16.

In Acts 10 we have the story of Cornelius praying to God, and the record says, ***"Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God."*** He was asked to send for Peter who would preach to him and his household, that they might know God's will, believe it, and obey it, so that they might be saved. After teaching Cornelius' family, Peter asked, ***"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord"*** (Acts 10:47,48). Now how were Cornelius and his household saved? Through prayer? No, they were saved through obedience to the Gospel of Christ. They called on the name of the Lord through their obedience, as Christ taught in Mark 16:15,16.

It is true that prayer is a means of calling upon the name of the Lord, but nowhere in the Scripture do you ever find anyone being saved and becoming a Christian through prayer only. God, no doubt, hears the sinner as he prays, just as He heard Cornelius, but He does not answer by saving a person through prayer alone. Why not? Because He has asked that man obey certain commands that he might be saved. As a matter of fact, there is nothing that a sinner can pray for that God has not already provided. All things have been made ready and if the sinner will now hear the gospel, believe it, repent of his sins, confess Christ, and be baptized, then he can be saved and added to the church. As a Christian, he may rightfully approach his Father in prayer, as one of the privileges and blessings he receives on becoming a child of God. Are you a Christian? If not, then you are lost, but the only way you can be saved is by obeying the Lord. You can pray and pray, but prayer alone will never save you. Prayer is for the child of God, not for the saving of the sinner.



Chapter 4

Can We Understand the Bible Alike?

In these studies, my goal is to acquaint you with the Bible. This is the book of books. It is God's book, a divine book, a holy book, because it contains the word of God. The Apostle Peter wrote, ***"For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"*** (2 Peter 1:21). Another writer, the Apostle Paul, said, "***All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"*** (2 Timothy 3:16,17). And on and on we could go with many other passages of scripture that exalt the word of God.

The purpose of the Bible is to reveal the Lord's will to man. It has been written in simple, clear language, for this reason. It is worded in such a way that any and all who really want to know God's will may be

able to understand it and obey it. Christ said concerning the word of God, ***"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth"*** (John 17:17). Again He said, ***"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"*** (John 8:32).

Another way of saying the same thing is that the Lord did not want us to go through life in darkness. Neither will He expect things of us that He has not revealed in His word. That is because God is a loving God, one who is just and merciful. He wants us to be saved, and has made every provision for us, to make it possible for us to be saved. If we are not saved in the end we will have no one to blame but ourselves (Acts 10:34,35).

Someone is ready to say that it is great that we have God's word, and it is wonderful that He would give us a book that we can understand, but **can we all understand the Bible alike?** The answer is, "Most definitely yes, provided we *want* to." I would remind you again that if God created us, knows us, is aware of our needs, and has given us His will, then surely He would make it plain and understandable — so much so that we *can* understand it alike. God would not give us a book that deals with our needs but is so deep and difficult that we cannot understand it. Surely if this book deals with all humans equally, **we *can* understand it alike and agree on what it teaches, if that is the desire of our hearts.**

Yet, it is true that many who claim to believe in Christ, and who say that they are following the teaching of the Bible, are divided again and again in their beliefs and practices. These are the people who argue that each one has *his own interpretation.* But to the contrary, the word of God says, ***"...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation"*** (2 Peter 1:20). That is to say that **you and I do not have a right or the authority from God to place a personal interpretation on any part of the scripture!** We must accept it as it is. When we do that, we will understand it alike.

For example, Christ said, ***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"*** (Mark 16:16). Now we must agree on what these words mean, if we are being honest. There is no room for you to see it one way, and for me to see it another way. If we disagree, one or the other of us is wrong. *Both* may be wrong, but if we disagree on its meaning, both *cannot* be right. One can be right only when he believes and accepts exactly what the Lord has said.

The same is true with all of the teachings in Scripture that pertain to man's salvation and eternal life.

Of course there are other scriptures, not dealing with direct commands of doctrine that allow man to have the freedom of opinion, provided he does not try to force his opinion on others. An example of this would be when the Lord said that we must take the Gospel to every creature under heaven (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). The command **we must agree on is the fact that the Lord said that we must take the Gospel to every nation, and even to every creature in all the world,** but *He left it up to man to decide how he will go.* One might think that the best way to go would be to take a ship. Another might reason that it would be quicker to go by plane. As you can see, Christ has not specified one way or the other on this, and therefore He has left it to man to choose what is best for his time and circumstances.

Many other things fall into this category. We must worship God (John 4:24), and on each first day of the week (Acts 20:7), but He has left it up to us to decide the time we will meet, where we will meet, the type of building we will meet in, etc.

Then there are other passages and practices that leave room for spiritual growth: How often do we fast (Matthew 6:16)? Do we meet regularly as a congregation for corporate Bible study, in addition to worship on the first day of the week? Do we have both morning and evening services? Again, as individuals and as congregations we may reach different conclusions on these points, but we must never force our views on others or divide the church over opinions.

In the light of these thoughts, let me state again that those commands and facts that pertain to our salvation and where we will spend eternity must be accepted, believed, and obeyed as they are. Since all of them apply to all of us, and God is no respecter of persons, then we cannot be divided on them. Rather, we must be united and stand as one. That is, when we believe the same teaching and obey the same commands we are saved alike, added to the same church, wear the same name, worship together, work with each other, teach the same things, and have the same hope. There can be no divisions among us in this case. ***"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you,***

but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Now, where is the problem when we are unable to understand the Bible alike? In the first place, we cannot blame God for our failure. Surely God would not ask us to do things that would divide us and cause us to go in different ways. Usually, the division develops because man is not willing to do what God has asked him to do. He rebels. He wants to have his own way. Therefore **he ends up changing God's message to suit his own purposes.**

Another reason why there are those who advocate that we cannot see the Bible alike is because they have been told this all their lives, and they actually believe it. This is the devil's work. He wants us to believe this. When we believe it we will readily accept all of the division that is in the religious world, and we might even conclude that it is normal and has the Lord's blessing.

We can understand things alike when we want to. This applies to education, our work, home life, and also religion. Why is it that one group of people can be united on the idea of one particular church, and yet another group is united in another church? Is it not on the basis of what they have been taught, what suits them, etc.? Also, in each case, these people have been taught the doctrines and commandments of men instead of, or in addition to, the plain teachings of the Bible. If all were taught the same thing, then no doubt all would believe the same thing. It is just that simple.

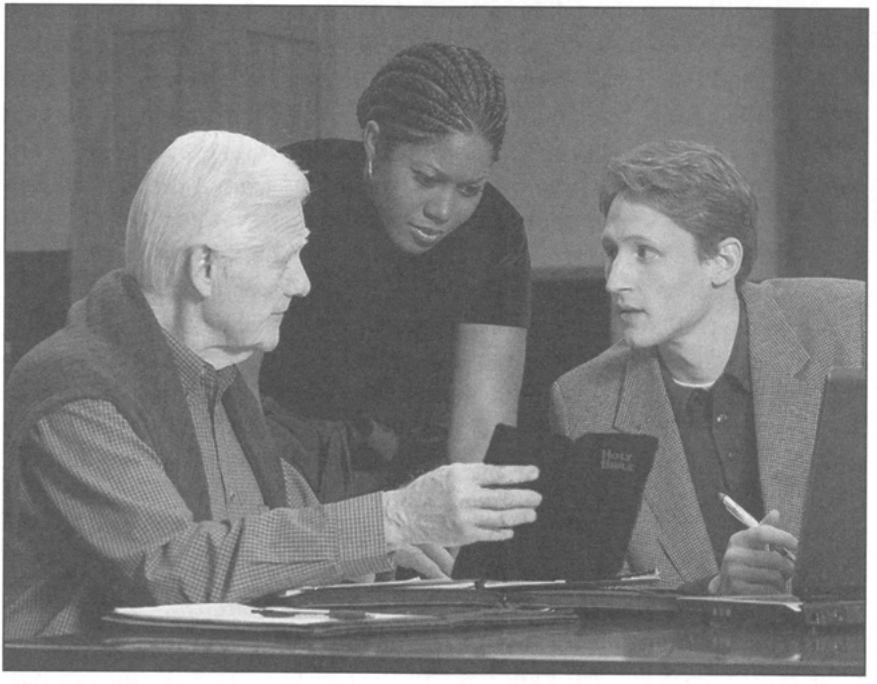
Suppose there was an isolated area somewhere that had a million people living in it. Suppose those people had never experienced any type of religious teaching. Then suppose someone arranged to fly over that area and drop enough New Testaments so that all might have a copy. Now what would happen if no one was sent to teach them, but they were simply left to read and study on their own and to obey what they would be reading in God's word? If they, indeed, were brought to the point of belief through their study, and then they obeyed its teaching, what would be the result? Would they not believe the same thing, obey the same message, become Christians only, and members of the Lord's church? For sure, if they followed the teaching of Christ, that's all they could be. They would certainly not be members of this denomination, and that denomination, because they wouldn't know anything about such religious groups. The

only way the various religious groups of men could ever be there would be for the demoninational preachers and teachers to go in and tell the people how to divide into the different religious bodies.

All of this is to say that when we follow the Bible only, we will be Christians only, and members of the same church, the church of Christ. That's not *my* way, *my* church, or anyone else's way. Instead, it is the Lord's way. God hates division, and Christ prayed that we might all be one (John 17:20-23).

How wonderful it is that we have a book, the Bible, that will unite us and make us one in Christ. If our beliefs and practices are dividing us, then that is full proof that error is being taught and believed and followed.

I want to encourage you to go to the Bible, read and study it, and do what it teaches. If you will believe in God and Christ as His Son (Hebrews 11:6; John 14:1), turn away from your sins (Acts 17:30), confess Christ as the Son of God, unto salvation (Romans 10:10), and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins (Mark 16:16), then the Lord will save you and add you to His church (Acts 2:47). He will not only do that for you, but for all others who will do likewise. The Bible teaches that there is one way to heaven, it is a narrow way, and any one trying to go another way is a thief and robber (John 14:6; Matthew 7:13,14; John 10:1).



Chapter 5

Is Sin Inherited?

In this series of studies we are considering religious questions that are most often asked by people in general. For our study at this time we are raising the question: "Is sin inherited?" Many believe that it is. They understand that, as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve in the beginning, all human beings since then are born *with* sin. (Some, now, even approve of abortion, saying that the unborn baby is already a sinner!) That is, they believe that humans inherit the guilt of Adam's sin and, therefore, we are lost sinners from birth. They even go so far as to say that because a baby is born with sin, when that child cries or does naughty things, it is the devil working in him or her. Out of this belief has grown the practice of infant baptism. But does the Bible teach this? Do we really believe that God would hold millions and billions of people responsible for sins that others committed? Let's see what God's word says about this matter.

We'll begin by taking a look at Adam and Eve and the sin they committed. Going back to the book of Genesis, chapters 2 and 3, God created man and woman — Adam and Eve — and placed them in a beautiful garden called Eden, gave them everything they needed, and made but one restriction: ***"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"*** (Genesis 2:16,17). Now, why would God even bring up such a thing as that? Because He made man, and He had every right to tell him what he could do, and could not do. But it would be no glory to God if man had no freedom to choose to love and obey His Creator or to disobey Him; if man had no choice in the matter. So God gave Adam the ability to decide between good and evil. He could obey or disobey, but to disobey would carry a penalty. That penalty was spiritual and physical death.

You would think that man would choose to obey God, but not so. The serpent, who was the old Devil himself, came to Eve to tempt her. ***"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Has God indeed said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die. Then the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate"*** (Genesis 3:1-6).

You will note that Eve knew clearly what God's will was on this. You will note also that the serpent told her that she would not die, but would rather become as a god. So she ate of the fruit, and so did Adam. Then what happened? Immediately their eyes were opened, and they knew they were naked. Before this moment they had dwelt without sin, in pure innocence, and without any fear of God. But now that they had sinned, things changed quickly for them. They became aware of themselves, their nakedness, the need for covering, and the fact that they had gone against God's wishes, so they hid themselves from Him.

So far, they had felt only the guilt of sin, but that was nothing in comparison to what was to follow. There would be great consequences. For one thing, they died spiritually when they partook of the forbidden fruit. That is, they became sinners, and separated from God. But that was not all. We read, ***"So the Lord God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.***

"To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children, your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.

"Then to Adam He said, Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it; cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.

"And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

"Then the Lord God said, behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever — therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life" (Genesis 3:14-24).

The question is: Who had sinned? Adam and Eve. They did not *inherit* any sin, since there was no man or woman before them, and inasmuch as they were perfect prior to their disobedience. The consequences for sin was passed upon them, and all others, who would come after them.

The consequences were spiritual and physical death, the pain of child birth, the wife's desire being left to the husband, and he would rule over her, a cursed ground from which to make a living by the sweat of the face — by physical toil and labor. But keep in mind that there is a difference in *inheriting sin* and inheriting the *consequences* of sin. One may suffer the consequences of sin even though he did not commit the sin. A mother and children may have to go hungry because the father went out and gambled his money away, or used it on illicit drink. But the mother and children are not to be held responsible for the actions of the father. And so it is with the sins of Adam and Eve. We have to suffer many consequences of their sin, but we are not held accountable for *their sin, itself.* We did not inherit their sin, we are not guilty of their sin, and we will not have to answer to God for what they did. Rather, we will have to answer to God for the sins that we have committed.

Ezekiel of the Old Testament said, "***The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself"*** (Ezekiel 18:20). In other words, each one will be accountable for his own sins. For example, if a father commits murder, the law does not take the son and try him in the courts for murder, find him guilty, and punish him. Why? Because it was not the son who committed the murder, but the father. Therefore the police will want the father, so he can be taken to court, tried, and punished for his wicked deed. And so it is with us. God is not going to hold us responsible for Adam's sin, or any other person's sin. Instead, He will hold us responsible for the sins we have committed.

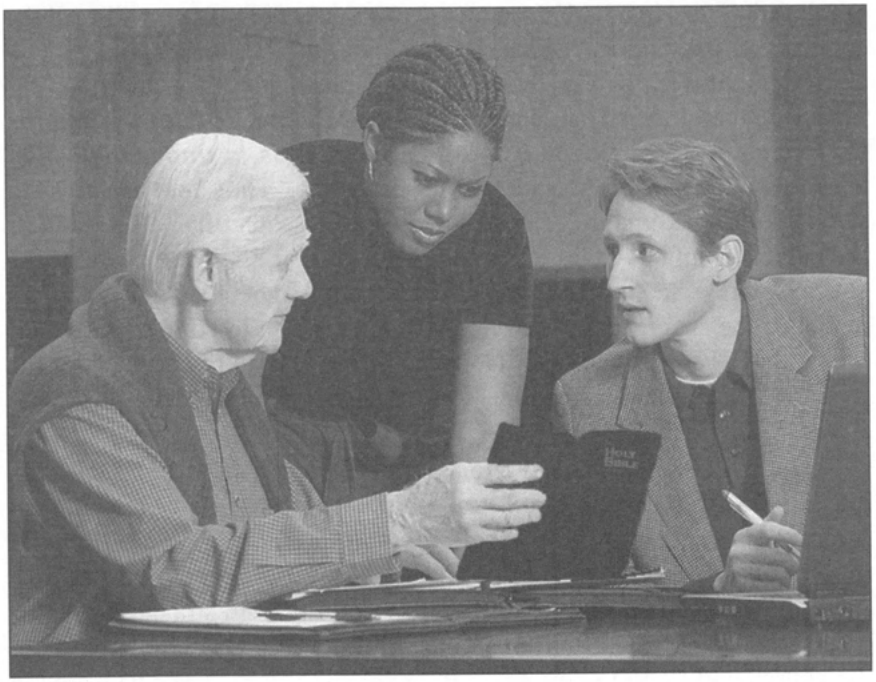
But someone may ask about David having been shapened in iniquity, and conceived in sin, as recorded in Psalm 51:5. This does not say that David was born **with** sin, but rather that **he was born of a sinful person — his mother — into a sinful world.** David would not be accountable, however, for his mother's sin, or for the sin of any other person, living or dead.

We read in Romans 3:23, ***"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*** In Romans 3:10 the Apostle Paul writes, "As it is written: there is none righteous, no, not one." What does he mean by these statements? Is he teaching that every human is a sinner, as a result

of inheriting the sin of Adam and Eve? Certainly not. If you will read the context you will find that he was talking about those who were old enough to know right from wrong, those who were accountable for their own actions, and therefore, ***"Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood."*** (Romans 3:13-15). This doesn't sound like these sinners are babies or infants, does it? As a matter of fact, the commands of the Gospel are directed to those who are old enough to believe, old enough to repent of the sins *they* have committed, old enough to confess with their mouth that Christ is the Son of God, and old enough to be baptized for the remission of *their* sins. Read Mark 16:16; Acts 17:30; Romans 10:10; and Acts 2:38.

In Matthew 18:2,3, ***"Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."*** Now, if children are born **with the guilt of the sin of Adam and Eve,** doesn't it seem strange that Jesus would tell His disciples that they must become as little children to enter the church and to go to heaven? Of course the fact is, Jesus was able to make that statement because little children are without sin, they are pure, and they are safe. Because of that, they do not need to be baptized and even though they die they will not be lost, but rather, they will go to heaven. As they continue to grow and to develop, physically and mentally, reaching the age of accountability, knowing right from wrong, then they become sinners, and then they have need of obeying God to be saved.

My friends, don't worry about whether you have Adam's sin, but rather be concerned about the sins you have committed. You will have to answer for them. If you are not a Christian, and a member of the church that you can read about in the Bible, the church of Christ, then I want to encourage you to obey God, and He will save you and add you to the church. Christ said, ***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"*** (Mark 16:16).



Chapter 6

Can One Be Saved by Living a Good Moral Life?

Let's consider the question, "Can one be saved by living a good moral life?" This is a very important question, because it concerns millions of people of all walks of life. Likewise it involves those of all types of religious persuasion. But since we believe there is but one God, and we have every evidence necessary to support this, and inasmuch as we believe the Bible to be His word, and in like manner we have many proofs and evidences to back up this statement, we will go to God and His word for the answer to this question.

First, let me give some background. There are many people, both religious and non-religious, who are living what we may think of as good moral lives. By this we mean that they are not basically bad people. They

are honest and sincere. They pay their debts. They do not lie, steal, or cheat. They do not indulge in immoral practices. They are good neighbors, kind, and helpful. They are respected, and those who know them would speak well of them. As a matter of fact, they are the kind of people that you just couldn't say enough good things about.

Because so many people are like this, and because those who are not religious, as such, are sometimes "better" people than those who profess religion, some have concluded that all you have to do to be saved and go to heaven is to live a good moral life. But does the Bible teach this?

According to the Bible, when a person reaches the age of knowing right from wrong, he becomes a sinner. A sinner may be described as one who is living in open sin, one who breaks the law of man and God. Jesus spoke of publicans and sinners (Matthew 9:10). He also said, ***"But go and learn what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance"*** (Matthew 9:13). In Luke 18:13 a publican went up to the temple of God to pray, and said, ***"God, be merciful to me a sinner!"*** Paul wrote, ***"...knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust"*** (1 Timothy 1:9-11). Again, Peter wrote, ***"Now if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"*** (1 Peter 4:18).

Not only is one a sinner when he openly and intentionally breaks the law, and does those things that are wrong, but one may also be a sinner when he *fails* to do the things that he should do. James wrote, ***"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin"*** (James 4:17). That is, when one knows God's will, but fails or neglects to obey it, whether it is in obeying the direct commands of God to be saved, or in responding to some good work, then that person sins. To be more specific, we are told, ***"...for all have sinned and fail short of the glory of God"*** (Romans 3:23). Again, ***"As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one"*** (Romans 3:10). ***"But God demonstrates His own love***

toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). And finally, ***"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"*** (Romans 6:23). According to these passages of Scripture, *every accountable being is classified as a sinner.* Even when we obey God, and strive to live the Christian life, we are still sinners, since we are still in the flesh, and we still make mistakes, and we still sin, even though it may be unintentional. If that be true, then surely the one who has not obeyed God, even though he is living a good moral life, is a sinner, and is therefore lost as he is.

Listen to a conversation that Jesus had with a man who came to Him to enquire about eternal life: ***"Now behold, one came and said to Him, Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? So He said to him, Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments"*** (Matthew 19:16,17). God *only* is good, because all goodness, grace, and mercy come from Him. He can save us, but we must submit to His will to be saved. That being so, how can we say that we are good? No human is perfect, so how can we rely on the "good moral life" that we are living to save us and to take us to heaven?

In Acts 10 and 11 we read about a good man — a good moral man, one who lived a clean life, and one who did good works. Let's read some of the story to get the picture: ***"There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always"*** (Acts 10:1,2).

Now you will note that the scriptures do not speak of him as a *good* man, but as a good man is often described in our time, certainly we would have to say that Cornelius was a good man. But what about him? Was he saved? As devout as he was, praying to God, fearing God, giving to the poor, being a good husband and father, **still he was lost!** How do we know? Because in this early age of the beginning of the salvation being offered through the death of Christ, God took note of Cornelius, sent an angel to him in a vision and asked him to send for the Apostle Peter. In the meantime, Peter had a vision and he was likewise told that he should go to Cornelius and his household. Why did the Lord want to have Cornelius

and Peter to meet? Because Cornelius was lost, and Peter could preach the Gospel to him so that he might obey it and be saved. To make a long story short, Peter went to Cornelius and preached to him and his family, and concluded by asking, ***"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days"*** (Acts 10:47,48).

Now if it was necessary for a man like this to obey the Gospel to be saved, what about good people of our time, or any time? Can one be a good person and refuse to acknowledge God, to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and to accept Him as Lord and Master? Can one be a good person and reject the sacrifice of Christ, when He died upon the cross for the sins of the world? Can one be a good person when he refuses to obey the Gospel of Christ? Can one be a good person when he rejects the Lord's church? Can one be a good person when he refuses to worship the Lord as He has directed in His word? Can one be a good person when he fails to follow Christ and to live the Christian life? Surely he cannot.

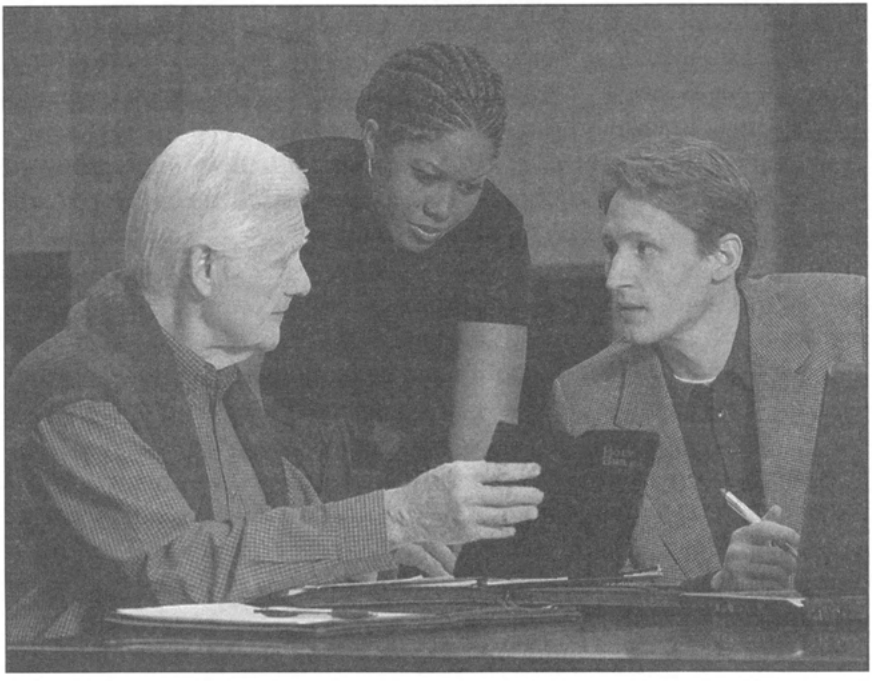
Praying, good works, giving of one's money and time to good causes, and living a clean and good moral life cannot save anyone. For sure, *it is necessary* to live a good moral life, to be obedient to God, and to live the Christian life, but a good moral life, *alone,* is not enough to save one and to take him to heaven. To attempt to be saved on a good moral life is an effort on the part of an individual to be saved on *his own goodness,* on his own terms, by determining what he will or will not do, separate and apart from God's will. This is an impossibility. **Such a belief denies the necessity for a Saviour. It is a blatant statement that the death of the Son of God was totally unnecessary, because it is saying that being baptized into the death of Christ is not required in order for us to be forgiven for our sins.**

The truth cannot be denied: **We are sinners, and we cannot save ourselves,** and neither can anything or anybody save us, except the God of heaven. And He can save us only as we submit ourselves to Him in obedience to His will.

James says that we must be doers of the word (James 1:22). We are told that if we are to be saved we must believe in God. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6). We must likewise believe

that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 14:1). Then we must repent of our sins. Christ warns that if we do not we will perish (Luke 13:3). Paul says that ignorance is no excuse, but that all men everywhere must repent, or turn away from their sins (Acts 17:30). Next, we must confess Christ as the Son of God. We are to do this with the mouth unto salvation (Romans 10:10). Christ said that if we would confess Him before men, He will confess us before His Father, but that if we deny Him before men, He will deny us before His Father (Matthew 10:32,33). Finally, He says that we must be baptized. Christ Himself tells us, ***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"*** (Mark 16:16). Now if we believe in Jesus, we will surely do what He says, and He says that we must not only believe, but that we must be baptized as well; and if we do not believe enough to do that, we will be lost. But when we obey Him, He saves us, and He adds us to His church, the church that belongs to Him, the church of Christ (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47). But even then, that is not enough. As a Christian we must follow Christ daily, living a godly and pure life before God and before man (Luke 9:23; Matthew 5:16). If we are faithful in this unto death, then the Lord promises to give us a crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

No, one cannot be saved by living only a good moral life. We are sinners, and there is only one way to be forgiven of our sins: through obeying the Lord, so that our sins are blotted out by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7). This is done as we have already stated, by obeying the commands of the Gospel and living the faithful Christian life.



Chapter 7

Does "Faith Only" Save?

"Does faith only save?" What would your answer be if someone asked you this question? Millions around the world would say yes, without any hesitation. But it is not a matter of how *we* would answer this question, but the important thing is to go to the Bible, to God's own word, to see what it says. The question then will be, will we accept what God says as the final answer on this subject? If not, then the answer will matter little, one way or the other, because no one can please God when he refuses to accept the authority of God's word!

First of all, let us note that the Bible places great emphasis on the importance of faith. Faith means belief, trust, and acceptance without question. Faith is based on proofs and evidences but does not involve knowledge that comes through *seeing* or *touching*. None of us have seen God, but there are many proofs and evidences that He exists. Another

example closer to home would be that most of us have never seen our leaders, but again, there is sufficient evidence that they are real, and we accept them without question. We believe that they live and are doing the things we read about in the newspapers.

Continuing, we read, ***"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him"*** (Hebrews 11:6). But how does this faith come? Paul says, ***"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"*** (Romans 10:17). Does faith come in any other way? If so, the Bible does not say so. Therefore, in order for faith to be genuine it must be based on hearing the word of God, as recorded in the Bible, the only source of God's will for humans.

How many faiths are there? Paul wrote the Christians at Ephesus, ***"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"*** (Ephesians 4:1-6).

I have quoted this whole section of scripture for a purpose. I wanted you to see that with each one of these, Paul says there is but one: there is **one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one body or church, one faith, one baptism,** and **one hope.** I assume that you can count, and that you know what *one* is. It is not two, three, a dozen, a hundred, a thousand, etc. But one is one, no more and no less. Now among these ones, he says that there is **one faith.** There may be different degrees of faith, but there is but one faith. That is, if God has given us His word, and if we all believe it, then we will all believe the same thing. That is how there is but one faith. Isn't that simple? When someone tells you that there is more than one faith, or that there are many faiths, then you should remind them that the Bible says that there is but *one* faith. If we can understand that there is but one God, one Lord, etc., then we can understand that there is but one faith. As a matter of fact, there are as many faiths as there are Gods, Lords, or Spirits. But in each case, the writer says that there is but one, and he means just that.

Some may believe that this one faith is *mental acceptance* only, and this is the kind that many people have. They mentally accept the idea of God, and that Christ is the Son of God, but this is as far as it goes. They believe that this "faith only" saves them. But the Scriptures show that this type of faith is not sufficient to save anyone. The kind of faith that God expects us to have is not only *mental* acceptance of His existence but it is the kind that *acts*, expressing itself in obedience.

Those who advocate that faith only saves always refer to those verses of scripture that mention faith, but do not specifically mention other things that are necessary to salvation. They especially like to quote John 3:16, where Christ says, ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*** We could quote other similar verses, but the point that many want to make is that nothing is mentioned here except belief or faith, and that the command to be baptized is not included. But then we would ask, since repentance is not referred to, does that mean that one can be saved without repenting of his sins? Such people will respond by saying that repentance is included in belief. I would agree with that, but I would also hasten to say that just as repentance is included in genuine faith, so is baptism, and any other condition the Lord has given that pertains to salvation. The point is that if we really believe in God, **we will do what He says.** If not, then how can we say that we truly have faith in Him?

Another favorite passage people go to try to uphold "faith only" is found in Acts 16. Here we find Paul and Silas in jail in Philippi and they are miraculously delivered. The jailer is convinced that this is an act of God, and he comes to them and says, ***"... Sirs, what must I do to be saved? So they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household"*** (Acts 16:30,31). Again I would remind you that those who try to teach that the Bible is advocating faith only, will quote these verses to uphold their position, and they will stop right there. But that is not the whole story. Who was the jailer anyway? He was a pagan unbeliever up to this point. Therefore when he was finally brought to the place where he would ask what to do to be saved, it would be only natural that Paul and Silas would tell him that he must believe in Christ. But then what follows? They went on to preach the Gospel to him. Now how does faith come? We read earlier that faith comes by hearing the

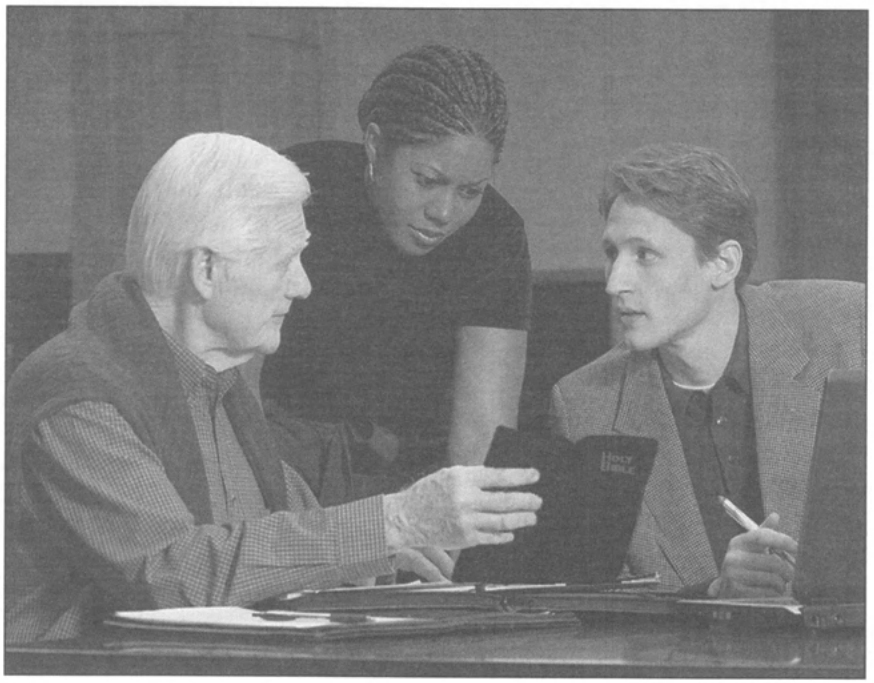
word of the Lord. But after the jailer had heard the word of God, what did he do? Let's read so we can see exactly what happened: ***"Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized"*** (Acts 16:32,33). What did the jailer do after he heard the word of the Lord? First of all he washed the stripes of Paul and Silas. Earlier he had beaten them, but now he is washing their wounds. What does that suggest? Repentance, a change of heart. Then what did he and his family members do? They were baptized. How did they even know about baptism? Obviously, it is a major part of the Gospel message, so baptism for the forgiveness of sins was included in what Paul and Silas taught the jailor and his family. They relayed what our Lord had said, ***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"*** (Mark 16:16). Does this sound like faith only? Certainly not.

In Romans 10:9 Paul says, ***"...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*** But let's go on: ***"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"*** (Romans 10:10). The word "unto" as used with belief and confession, has reference to going on *toward* salvation, not that one has already been saved. Also the form of the word "believes" in the Greek means "continuing action". That is, it is the kind of belief that is not limited to mental acceptance, or to faith only, but belief that leads one to do whatever the Lord has commanded. The writer of Romans goes on to say that God will save those who call on Him, and then he explains that for one to be able to "call on the Lord", he must hear the word of the Lord. But why? That, as a result of hearing, he might believe and obey what God has commanded. In this way he is saved by faith, not by faith only, but through a faith that moves him to obey God. In this obedience he is calling on the name of the Lord to honor His promise to save him because of his obedience.

Please keep in mind that one cannot isolate and accept only those verses that fit his particular theory. We must take *all* of the word of God. It will not contradict itself. There will be no conflict whatsoever. If there seems to be one, then you just need to study further. You will then find that the problem was not with the word of God, but with you.

Now turn with me to James 2. In this chapter we have the one verse in all of the scripture that speaks of faith only, but in this case, the idea is refuted! After giving some examples to show that faith works by expressing itself in obedience, James says, ***"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only"*** (James 2:24). In James 2:26 he says, ***"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."*** The works that he speaks of here do not refer to the works of the law, or to man's own works of righteousness, but to the works of God, those works that are the result of obeying God's commands.

My friends, the kind of faith that is set forth in the Bible is a working faith, a faith that leads one to do God's will without question. "Faith only" is dead. It has never saved anyone. God has always required that man do something to show his faith. It is true that we are saved by the grace and mercy of God, but only as we accept it, and as we express our faith in obedience. You will note that Paul said in Ephesians 2:8,9 that we are saved *by grace through faith*, and that means that it is by grace on God's part, but by faith on man's part. What kind of faith? One that *obeys*.



Chapter 8

Are There Many Ways to Heaven?

In this study we are going to be talking about heaven, the eternal home that has been prepared for righteous souls. Christ was speaking of this place when He said to His disciples, ***"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also"*** (John 14:1-3). All of us surely want to go to that prepared place when we leave this world.

But in talking about heaven, and how we may go there, the question is often asked, "Are there many ways to heaven?" This question grows out of the popular belief that there are indeed many ways to heaven. It is said that there are different roads, but that they all lead to that same

eternal city. It is further said that some choose to go one way, and others choose to go another way, but in reality all are striving to reach God. This belief has grown out of the various religions created by men and the many denominational groups that claim to be following Christ. It is an attempt to somehow justify these groups and their practices, and to argue for their sakes, and for the sakes of others, that after all, even though they may be divided and all of that, they are still trying to go to heaven like everyone else.

Where does the Bible say that there are many ways to heaven? Where does it say that there are even *two* ways? The fact is, the Bible does not teach such a thing! It teaches, rather, that there is but *one way.* Which way is that? We will allow Christ to give us the answer: He said, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"*** (John 14:6). Please note carefully what our Lord said. He declared that *He is the way,* and that the *only* way for one to go to the Father is to go through Him. How can anyone conclude from this statement that there are different ways to heaven?

Again, Christ said, ***"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber"*** (John 10:1). The sheepfold represents **the church,** the Lord's people, and Christ in this parable is **the door,** the one way into the church, and finally into heaven itself. He says that if one tries to enter in some other way than through Himself, he will be considered a thief and a robber. But what will happen to thieves and robbers? They will not be going to heaven, for sure. That means there is but one way to heaven after all.

In Ephesians 4:4-6, the Apostle Paul says, ***"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*** With each one of these, you will note that there is but **one.** Through inspiration, Paul says there is ***one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one body, one faith, one baptism, and one hope.*** But notice again. There is but one God or Father, one Lord or Son and Saviour, one Spirit who has revealed the will of God, one body or church, one faith based on God's word that leads hearers to be baptized to be saved and to be added to the Lord's church, which brings us to hope,

the one hope. **If we all believe in God, and in Christ as the Son of God, read and study the same word that the Spirit has given, then we will all believe the same thing, and therefore, we will have the one faith that he speaks of here. If we all believe and obey the same words of the Spirit, we will all be baptized alike, which is a burial in water for the remission of sins (Acts 8:36-39; 2:38). If we all do that, we will all be saved alike, and added to the same church, the Lord's church, the one and only church that we read about in the scriptures, and this will give all of us the same hope, which is the one hope of heaven. That means that there is but one way to heaven.**

My friends, there are as many ways to heaven as there are Gods, Lords, Spirits, churches, faiths, baptism, and hopes. But how many are there of each of these? Only one! Still, if you have been taught denominational doctrine, you may again revert back to the old argument that there are different ways to some large city, so in like manner, there must be many ways to the heavenly city. But there is just one thing that you have overlooked in this case, and that is that the Lord has specified a certain road that *must* be followed: Christ, the one way. You must go according to **His** instructions, or you cannot go. You might try to go another way, but He will not accept you on that judgment day.

Do you remember that Christ warned that at the judgment, there will be those there who will argue their case, but still they will be rejected? Listen to what He says: ***"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"*** (Matthew 7:21-23). Here were people who were trying to go to heaven in different ways, or by traveling different doctrinal roads, but they didn't make it. They were deceived into thinking that they belonged to the Lord even though they had never really obeyed Him. How sad for Christ to have to tell them that He did not know them: ***"Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."***

Speaking of ways, the Lord Himself said that there are two ways humans can travel, but only one of them leads to heaven. Listen to Him:

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13,14). Remember, there is but one road that leads to life, and that is the narrow way. The broad way leads to destruction.

My friend, God wants you to go to heaven. He sent His Son into this world to die on the cross to make this possible (John 3:16). But for you to be saved, you must meet the Lord's conditions instead of attempting to go the way you want to go, or by listening to what others say. In the long ago, the wise man wrote, ***"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"*** (Proverbs 16:25).

The Lord has made the way to heaven easy for all to find and to follow, if that is what we want to do. Christ said, ***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"*** (Mark 16:16). Those who love the Lord and want to please Him will do that. There is no other way to be saved. You may find verses that speak of faith, repentance, confessing Christ, the blood of Christ, etc., but all of this is involved in believing and being baptized to be saved.

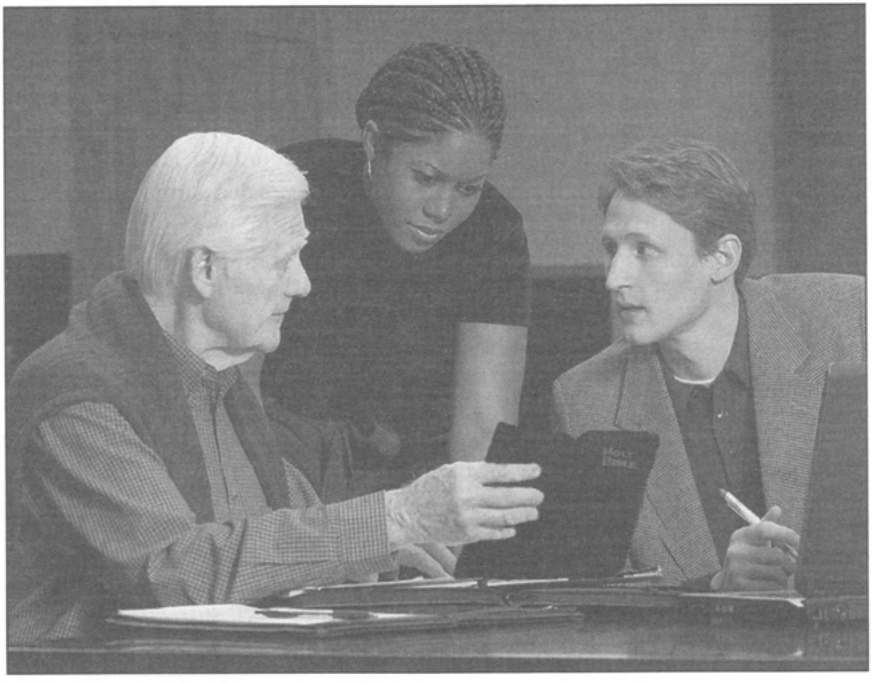
Now, when you do these things, the Lord will save you and add you to His church (Acts 2:47), the one and only church that we read about in the scriptures. We noticed earlier in Ephesians 4:5 that there is but one body, and according to Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 1:22,23, the body is the church and the church is the body. But if there is but one body, and it is the church, then there is but one church. Which one is that? The one that Christ promised to build (Matthew 16:18), the one He died for (Ephesians 5:25), the one He is the saviour of (Ephesians 5:23), the one that He is head of (Colossians 1:18), the one that wears His name (Acts 4:12; Romans 16:16). How could you hope to go to heaven without being a member of the church of Christ? Are you a member of that church? If not, you are not even saved, because if you were saved, the Lord would have added you to His church. Again, read Acts 2:47. The Scriptures state clearly that Christ is the saviour of **the body, the church,** so one must be a member of the church to be saved and go to heaven.

Beyond that, you must worship the Lord as He has specified, live the faithful Christian life, and do the many things that God requires of

those who belong to Him. Only then can you go to heaven. Peter writes, ***"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"*** (1 Peter 4:17,18). Did you hear what he said? The judgment will begin with the house of God, the church, and if this be true, then what will happen to those who have not obeyed the Gospel to be saved, and to be added to the Lord's church? Again, if the righteous are just barely going to make it to heaven through the atoning blood of Christ because of the grace and mercy of God, what will happen to the ungodly and the sinners?

The Bible, the word of God, serves as a road map to heaven. It tells sinnners how to enter the narrow way, it warns of the dangers along the way, it gives signs and directions so that one can be certain that he is on the right road, and to assure him that he will reach his final destination, that heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, heaven itself.

Are there many ways to heaven? The answer is NO. This is man's teaching, and it originated with Satan. The Lord has only one way. We either go that way, or not go at all.



Chapter 9

What Must One Do to be Saved?

The question that is perhaps asked more than any other is, "What must one do to be saved?" This is a great question because it concerns each of us. It implies that man is lost, and that there is something he must do to be saved.

If we took this question to the various preachers, churches, and religious groups, we would get a variety of answers. Some would tell us to believe only, others would say that we should pray the sinner's prayer, still others would advise us to live good moral lives, and then there would be those who would say that there is nothing to be done, since we are saved entirely by God's grace. We would soon discover that we would get as many answers as the times we might ask the question, but the disturbing thing would be that there would be such a variety of answers, and that they would contradict each other. So we would end up confused, frustrated,

and still without a scriptural answer to our question.

Let's go to the word of God for the answer. If man is a sinner, and needs to be saved, and if God sent His Son to die on the cross that man might be saved, then surely the Lord has revealed plainly and clearly what we must do to have our sins forgiven; and indeed He has. In the book of Acts in the New Testament, we have recorded some eleven cases of conversion. If we had the time to read through each one of those, we would find that although they dealt with different people, in different places, still they all heard the same message, obeyed the same teaching, and were saved in the same way. This was because they all had the same disease of sin, and therefore the same remedy, or cure, was given to each one alike. Although we will not have the time to consider all of them, we will take three of the cases for our study at this time. In each situation the same question was asked, "What must I do to be saved?" And in all three instances the same answer was given.

The first case we will consider is recorded in Acts 2:37, when the people on the day of Pentecost said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Before giving the answer, let's consider some things that led up to this question. The Lord had shortly before been crucified, buried, and resurrected. Just prior to His return to the Father in heaven, He asked the apostles to remain in Jerusalem where they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and then with the ability to speak in other languages and to perform miracles, they could prove to the people that they were of God, instead of just being another group of false teachers.

Therefore, on receiving the power on the day of Pentecost — a Jewish feast day in which Jews had come from all parts of the world — the apostles began to speak in other languages, the languages of those who were present. This astounded the hearers and they thought at first that the apostles were drunk, but Peter explained to them that they were not drunk, but that which was happening was according to the prophecy spoken by the prophet Joel; that in the last days the Lord would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. He and the apostles went on to preach the Gospel for the first time, in fact. They were speaking to a large group of people, some of whom had taken part in the Lord's crucifixion and, as a whole, even though they were Jews they did not believe in Christ. Therefore Peter

and the apostles began by showing that Christ had come in fulfillment of many prophecies, had performed miracles to prove that He was from God, and then had been crucified, buried, and resurrected, had appeared before many, and then had ascended back to His Father in heaven where He was reigning even then as King of kings and Lord of lords.

At this point we read, ***"Now when they head this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.' And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.' Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them"*** (Acts 2:37-41). Verse 47 says, ***"...praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."***

What did these people do in order to be saved? They heard the story of Christ and were pricked in their hearts, that is, they became believers. Based on their faith, they wanted to know what else they must do. They were then told that they should repent of their sins, and be baptized for the remission of their sins. Some three thousand did this and, as a result, they were saved and added to the Lord's church.

Let us now go to the second account, where the question was asked, "What must I do to be saved?" This time we will turn to Acts 9 to the story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Saul himself was a persecutor of the church, and even had letters from the high priest to go to Damascus and to bind Christians, both men and women, and to bring them back to Jerusalem to persecute them. We'll begin at this point and read what happened: ***"As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' So he, trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what do***

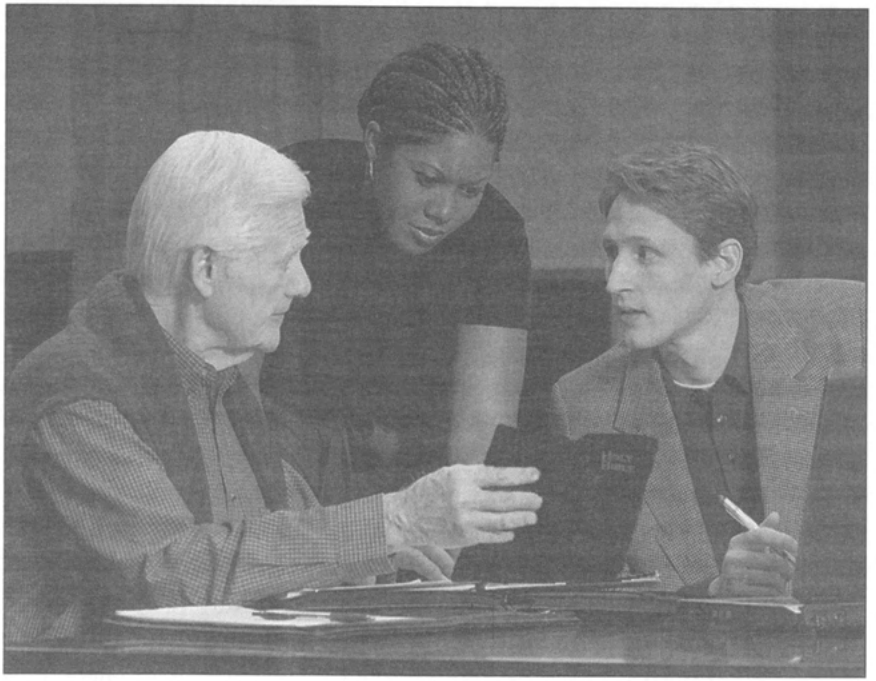
You want me to do?' Then the Lord said to him, 'Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.' And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank" (Acts 9:3-9). The record goes on to tell how Ananias, a Gospel preacher, came to him and told him what he should do to be saved. Later in telling what happened, Saul — now called Paul — said that Ananias came to him and said, ***"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"*** (Acts 22:16). According to many preachers today, Saul had already experienced all of the things that would seemingly qualify him to testify that he had been saved: he acknowledged Christ as "Lord", he was penitent, and he was praying — but was he saved? No. He was still in sin when Ananias told him to arise and be baptized. It was only when Saul completed his obedience that his sins were washed away in the waters of baptism.

Now let's review: What did Saul do to be saved? He became a **believer** in Christ; he showed his **penitent attitude** by fasting and praying for three days; he **acknowledged** the Lord by asking what he should do; and finally, when Ananias came to him and told him what else he should do, he was **baptized** to have his sins washed away. But how could that save him? Because it was what the Lord required of him, and in complying with His commands, Saul was forgiven of his sins, and therefore became a member of the Lord's church.

Finally, we will go to the third case of conversion where the question was asked, "What must I do to be saved?" This time we will turn to Acts 16. In the city of Philippi we find that Paul and Silas had cast an evil spirit out of a young lady who was being used by her masters for soothsaying. This greatly upset them, since they had lost their means of gain. Therefore they took Paul and Silas to the magistrates, and had them beaten and put in prison, ***"And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were lis-***

tening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awakening from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, 'Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.' Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' So they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household" (Acts 16:23-34). Now, the Philippian jailor and his family were unbelievers so they were told, first of all, that they had to become **believers** in the Lord in order to be saved. Paul and Silas then went on to preach the word of God to them, that they might believe. Then the jailer showed **repentance** by washing their strips, and he and his household were **baptized.**

What must you and I do to be saved? The same as the people in these three cases of conversion. We must **hear** the word of God (Romans 10:17), we must **believe in God and Christ as the Son of God** (Hebrews 11:6; John 14:1), we must **repent of our sins** (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30), we must **confess Christ as the Son of God** (Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32), and we must be **baptized for the forgiveness of our sins** (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). Then, as we are saved, Christ will add us to His church (Acts 2:47). Anything else? That's all, when it comes to the question of being saved, initially. Of course, one must then live the Christian life. But this study shows that the Lord does not save one person one way, and another person another way. It is simple and to the point. Don't believe the answers false teachers will give you. Do what God says in the Scriptures.



Chapter 10

Is Baptism Essential to Salvation?

When the subject of baptism is discussed, the question often arises, "Is baptism essential to salvation?" I have often wondered why anyone who has read the Bible would ask such a question, because it is clearly stated in the Lord's own words that one must indeed be baptized to be saved.

For some reason, someone years ago got confused on the role that baptism plays in our obedience to God. Perhaps he found it difficult to understand how we could be saved by faith, but still need to be baptized. Maybe he had been reading about the grace of God, and then to think that baptism would be required was just more than he could take. Whatever the problem, he must have preached long and loud that one could be saved without being baptized, because so many people in the religious world today agree with that doctrine. A great deal of prejudice has sprung up

around this subject. Often times it is so strong that those who take such a position will not even consider any other answer.

There are some things that we must keep in mind when we are talking about baptism, or any other Bible subject. We must remember that baptism *only* does not save, anymore than faith *only* saves. Furthermore, many things are involved with our salvation, so we must not conclude that just because one thing is commanded in one passage of Scripture, that excludes everything else — we must look for the complete answer. Also, keep in mind that just because baptism is essential to salvation, that does not mean that we are not saved by the grace of God. Regardless of how many commands we obey, we have not *earned* our salvation. Our obedience only qualifies us for His grace, making it possible for Him to extend His grace and mercy to us when we are humble enough to do whatever He has asked us to do.

Let's go on to the word of God to see what it says on the subject of baptism. Christ commanded the apostles just before His return to the Father in heaven: ***"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"*** (Mark 16:15,16). Please keep in mind that Christ wanted the apostles to preach this all over the world, and to every person subject to the Gospel. Evidently it was very important. He specifically said that ***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved."*** He did not say that he who *believes* shall be saved, or he that is *baptized* shall be saved, but rather He said, ***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved."*** Do you suppose, then, that anyone can be saved without doing what Christ commanded? Doesn't that command make baptism essential to salvation? Not baptism *only*, but baptism that is based on *faith*.

In other words, one must believe the Lord enough to do what He has commanded, and when one believes to that extent, his belief will lead him to be baptized. But why do that? Because Jesus said to do it. If one does not believe in Christ, or if one does not believe *enough* to do what the Lord has said, then it is only natural that he is not going to be baptized. That is why Jesus said, ***"He who does not believe will be condemned."*** So, if one wants to be saved, he must believe and be baptized, but if he wants to be lost, then he doesn't even have to believe! Another way of putting it, unbelief alone is enough to cause one to be lost, but in order to

be saved, one must believe enough to be baptized as the Lord commanded.

Now let's go to Acts 2:37,38. Here we have a group of people who had heard the gospel and, as a result, the record says, ***"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"*** The first thing I want you to notice is that on hearing the Gospel, as preached by the apostles, the listeners were cut to the heart. That is, they were touched, they believed what they had heard. This being so, they wanted to know what else they should do that they might be saved, or have the remission of their sins. At this point, Peter spoke up and said to them that since they were now believers, they must repent and be baptized in the name of Christ, or by His authority, that they might have the forgiveness of their sins, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

As a result of their obedience, we read in Acts 2:41 that ***"the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."*** What did these people do? They heard the Gospel, believed it, repented of their sins, were baptized, received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the Lord added these forgiven souls to His church. Now, baptism *only* didn't accomplish all of this, but **what if they had refused to be baptized?** Then they couldn't have had the remission of their sins, couldn't have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and they wouldn't have been added to the Lord's church. Doesn't this sound as though baptism might be essential to salvation? I don't know how one could read this plain language and conclude otherwise.

After the Lord appeared to Saul, and he wanted to know what he should do to be saved, he was told to go into the city, and there it would be told him what he must do. He was now a believer, penitent, fasting, and praying, yet he was not saved. Then Ananias came to him and said, ***"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"*** (Acts 22:16). He did so, had his sins washed away, was added to the church, and as a Christian, went forth to preach the gospel of Christ, having his name changed to Paul, and becoming an apostle of the Lord. Was baptism essential in this

case? Certainly, baptism *only* would not have washed his sins away, but it was when he believed the Lord, repented of his sins, and was baptized in compliance with the Lord's will that he was saved. Furthermore, it was through his obedience that he was able to come into contact with the blood of Christ in baptism, to wash away his sins.

Paul said later, ***"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"*** (Romans 6:3,4). There are several things that we should think about after reading these verses. First, it is through the act of obeying God, which includes baptism, that we picture the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. That is, by faith we repent of our sins, which means that we died to our sins, then we are buried in the waters of baptism, and finally we are raised from the water, or we are resurrected from that watery grave to walk in newness of life. Through our obedience in baptism we are saying that we believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Second, before baptism we were in sin, but through our obedience in being baptized we came forth clean and pure from our sins.

Third, in baptism we reach the benefits of Christ's death.

Fourth, baptism is a burial in water, as Christ was buried in the tomb.

And fifth, through baptism we enter Christ and become new creatures in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Again, all of these points tell us that baptism is most essential.

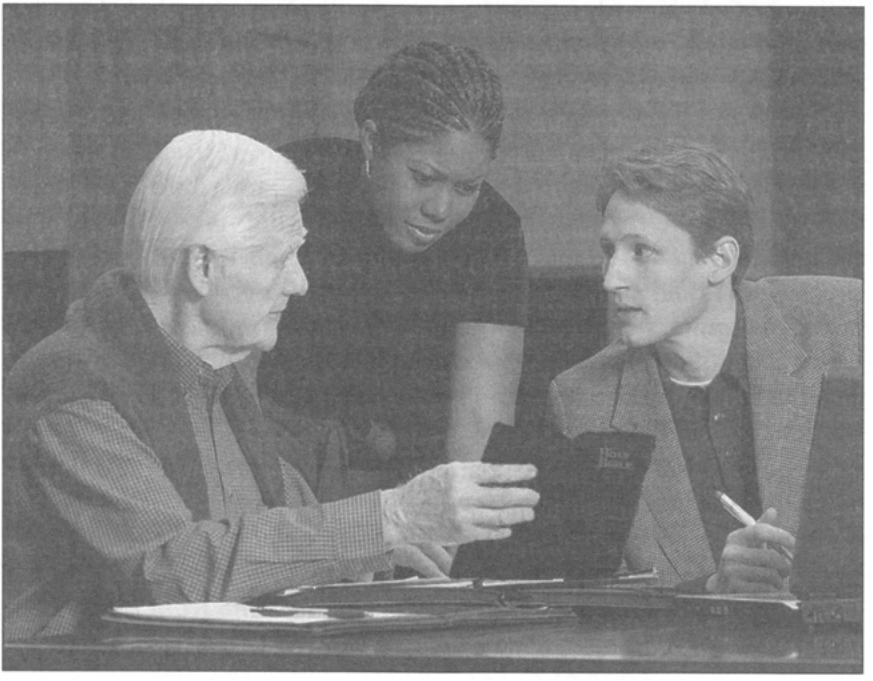
But let's go on and notice further that it is necessary to be baptized in order to enter Christ. Paul wrote the Galatian brethren, ***"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"*** (Galatians 3:26,27). Now, what is he saying in these statements? He is stating very clearly that children of God, by faith, are now in Christ. But how do they enter Christ is the big question. Through baptism. Is there any other way to enter Him? If there is, the Bible doesn't say so. So again this point makes baptism essential to man's salvation.

I might go on to say that to enter Christ is also to enter His body, which is His church over which He is the Head; and it is baptism that puts

one into Christ and His church. Read 1 Corinthians 12:13. Now, there are some who claim that they have been saved without ever being baptized. In that case, they are saying that they are saved **outside of Christ** and **outside of His church.** Do you believe that is possible? If so, you are saying that no one really needs Christ to be saved! That cannot be!

Please study these matters for yourself, and remember, you can't isolate various verses of scripture and use them to the exclusion of all others, but when you read and study all of the word of God, and harmonize it, then it all fits together and is easy to understand and obey. Things get confusing only when you listen to the theories and ideas of man. I plead with you, therefore, to go to the word of God for the truth on this question, and on all questions.

If you have not obeyed God, I pray that you will do so in order that you may be saved, and that you might be a member of the church of Christ.



Chapter 11

Is Sprinkling Baptism?

Because so many people substitute sprinkling for immersion in baptism, the question is often asked, "Is sprinkling baptism?" Sometimes the pouring of water on the head is said to be baptism. But the challenge is, can some practice other than immersion in water be accepted as baptism?

Let us begin by noticing, first of all, that the scriptures teach that there is but **one baptism.** Paul said in Ephesians 4:5, there is ***"one Lord, one faith, one baptism."*** But which one is that? We can know that answer also by allowing the word of God to define baptism.

The Apostle Paul wrote, ***"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"*** (Romans 6:3,4). He

said to the Colossian Christians, ***"...buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead"*** (Colossians 2:12).

From these Scriptures we would have to conclude that baptism is a burial. But what is a burial? The word "baptism" itself, as found in our English New Testament, has not actually been translated from Greek to English, but in this case it is an anglicized word, that is, it has been changed just enough to make it sound like an English word instead of a Greek word. But it comes from the Greek word "baptizo", which means **a burial, an immersion, to overwhelm.** I think all of us know what a burial means when it comes to burying a dead body. A hole or grave is dug in the ground, the dead body is put into the hole, and then it is covered over. Now, that is a burial.

Likewise, baptism is a burial. But how can baptism be a burial? In baptism the burial is in water. When we turn to Acts 8 we read the story of Philip preaching Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch. The record says, ***"Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized? Then Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing"*** (Acts 8:36-39).

What happened here? Philip baptized this man. How? It says that *they both went down into the water.* Why did they do this? Because it was necessary if Philip was to bury, or immerse, the eunuch in water. Now if Philip had only "sprinkled" the eunuch, there would have been no need for either of them to go down into the water! But they did go down and Philip baptized him. Then they came up out of the water. You will observe that the one who told this story made a supreme effort to emphasize that baptism was a burial in water. He specified that they both went down into the water, Philip baptized the eunuch, and then they both came up out of the water. If that wasn't a burial in water, what would you call it? Of course, you know it was a burial.

Why is a "burial" a critical point? Because the whole point of baptism is to portray the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ! The person repents, or dies to his sins, he is buried in the water, and then he is resurrected from the water to walk a new life. Read Romans 6. Now, where sprinkling is substituted for a burial, all of this parallel is lost. How can sprinkling picture the death, burial, and resurrection? The only thing it pictures is disobedience.

Baptism must be a burial to portray the new birth as taught in John 3:3-5. Again, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, ***"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."*** But how does one get into Christ, and the church, to be a new creature? I remind you that it is through baptism (Galatians 3:26,27), but sprinkling would not depict a new birth, or anything else, that is set forth in the word of God.

Read through the various cases of conversion in the book of Acts and not one time will you read of anyone being sprinkled for baptism. Where did such a practice come from? It originated with man. It is simply another case where someone thought that he could substitute for what God had said, but no man has been given the authority to change God's will or to substitute his way for God's way.

You might reason that it shouldn't make any difference, because it is only a symbolic act. You also might think that since so many practice sprinkling for baptism, surely there is nothing wrong with it. This kind of reasoning is foreign to God's will. If a human has the right to change one point, then another may reason that he has the right to change another point, and so there is no end to it. We would be wise to leave the Scripture as it is, and not to tamper with it. We are told that if we add to the word of God, take away from it, or substitute for it in any way, we are in serious trouble with the Lord Himself. Hear this warning: ***"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"*** (Revelation 22:18,19).

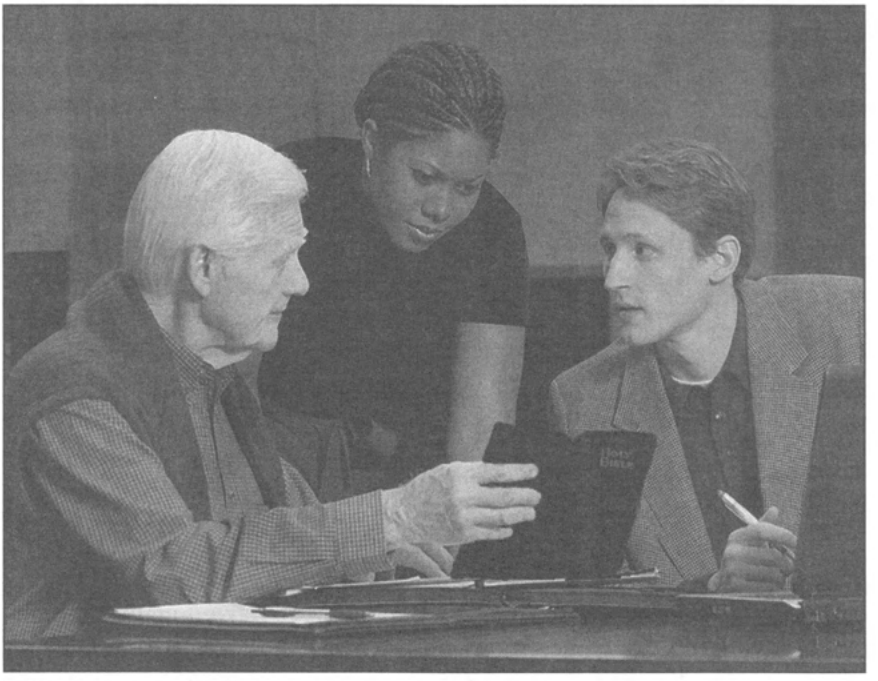
Here is another thing to consider: ***"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a***

different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9).

Why can't humans leave things the way they found them in God's word? **It is the Lord's word, and not ours.** We should, therefore, respect it and leave it as it is. Also, the Lord knows us, and He knows our needs. He has asked that we do only those things that must be done to be forgiven of our sins and to please Him. He certainly hasn't asked us to do anything that is unfair or unreasonable.

Sprinkling is a **questionable** act, but baptism as a burial in water is a **scriptural** act. Why take a chance? Why risk your soul by doing what the Lord has not authorized?

But someone might say, "I don't see any sense in it." It is true that if the matter had been left up to us, we might have skipped over baptism, but the fact is, *the Lord didn't leave that to you and me.* We should not question, doubt, or defy our Lord on this matter. How dare we have the nerve to question God's wisdom!



Chapter 12

What About the Thief on the Cross?

Any time the subject of baptism comes up, and it is pointed out that one must be baptized to be saved, someone asks the question, "But what about the thief on the cross?"

The Bible tells us that at the time of the Lord's crucifixion, He was placed between two thieves. This was to humiliate Him and His disciples and to leave the impression that He was a criminal worthy of death. The record says, ***"Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save yourself and us.' But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise'"*** (Luke 23:39-43).

There are several things that we want to observe about this incident. First of all, it is to be admitted that Jesus had mercy on the thief, who asked for mercy. Furthermore, on that day Christ was going to the place of the righteous dead, to **paradise**. The other place is **torment**, the place where the wicked go when they die. We have a good example of this in Luke 16 when the rich man and the poor man died. The rich man died and went to torment, but the poor man died and went to paradise. The dead remain in these separate places until judgment, and then they are judged, and either blessed with eternal life, and go to heaven, or else they are condemned to eternal damnation, and are sent to hell. But in the story under consideration, Jesus told this particular thief, ***"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."*** That is, they were going to die there on the cross and they would then go into paradise. This was simply assuring the thief that he was being forgiven, and that he would finally go home to heaven.

It is assumed by many readers that the thief had not been baptized prior to this occasion. On the other hand, it might also be assumed that *he had been baptized,* because John the Baptist had baptized many throughout the whole area. Concerning John, we read, ***"Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordon went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins"*** (Matthew 3:5,6). Now, who could say that the thief, who is under consideration, was not in that number? He might have been baptized, and then later he could have drifted away from God to become a thief.

Before we move further in the study, I want you to consider two very important points. People assume that the day of the crucifixion was the thief's first encounter with Jesus. But how did he address the Man who had also been condemned to crucifixion as a "criminal"? He said, "Lord"! Does that sound like a first encounter? Does that sound like the thief knew nothing of Jesus and the work He had been doing, the message He had been teaching throughout Israel? Or does it sound like **he believed that Jesus was the Messiah sent from God?**

And consider another important point: Except for the apostle John, the disciples had abandoned Christ in fear. Obviously, even if they had thought they understood that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning the coming Kingdom, they were totally confused by His

arrest and crucifixion. Did they still believe that their Lord would become the promised King over His kingdom? Evidently not, but the thief had a deeper comprehension than any of the disciples! His plea was, ***"Lord, remember me <u>when You come into Your kingdom</u>"*** (Luke 23:42). The thief evidently understood that the kingdom Christ would establish was spiritual, not an earthly kingdom of Israel! Even at the time of Christ's ascension back into heaven, according to Acts 1:6, the disciples, ***"... asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"***

These two points should convince any honest reader that the thief had a very deep comprehension of the mission of Christ, and believed wholeheartedly in Him — even though he had become a thief.

The next thing we want to notice is that Christ had the power, while He was living, to forgive sins as He chose. Seeing the thief in his sad state and hearing his words and his plea for mercy, the Lord had compassion on him. While Jesus lived, He showed His compassion on numerous occasions. For example, we read in Mark 2 of a group of people who brought a man to Him who was sick of the palsy. The record says, ***"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven you.'"*** Nothing is said in this case, and in others that could be given, about baptism, repentance, and any number of other things, but that does not mean that we, today, can be forgiven of the Lord and go to heaven without doing those things.

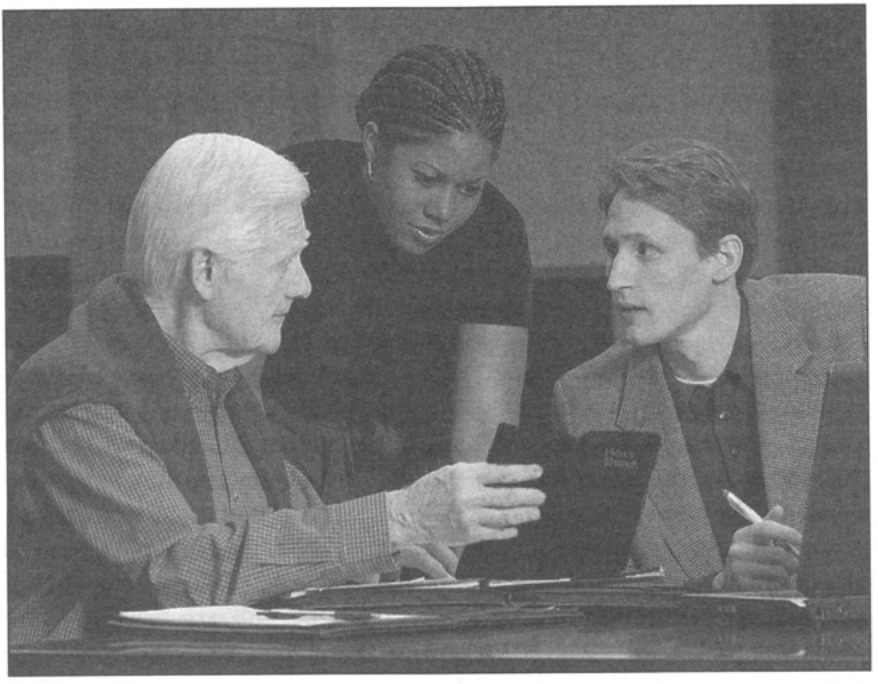
Why would the Lord forgive those people without requiring that they be baptized, and yet would command this obedience of us? One major thing that we must note here is the fact that they lived under one law, and we live under yet another law! The thief lived and died under *the law of Moses* ***before the death of Christ,*** but we live *after the death of Christ* and under **the law of Christ.** While Christ lived, He could forgive whomever He chose, and He could save the thief on the cross in response to his plea, but **the death of Christ sealed His new law with His blood;** therefore, if we are to be saved, we must comply with the terms that are binding under the law laid down in the New Testament.

When we understand that the Law of Moses was nailed to the cross and then replaced by the law of Christ, any confusion about salvation of the thief on the cross will be cleared up. ***"Blotting out the handwriting***

of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Colossians 2:14).

We live under the law of Christ. Therefore, we cannot go back to the law that existed before His death and use some example back there as a way to be saved today. ***"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"*** (John 1:17).

Had the Lord not commanded baptism, then we would not have to be baptized, but since He did command it, we must obey Him if we expect to be saved. Had you been there in the thief's place, perhaps you could have been saved without baptism, but since you were not there, but you live *now* and you live *under the law of Christ,* you must comply with the conditions He has set forth for you to be saved. If you are willing to do that, you may be saved. If you reject His will, you cannot be saved.



Chapter 13

Can One Be Saved Outside the Church?

In this lesson we are going to consider the question, "Can one be saved outside the church?" This is an excellent question to study, since so many people are constantly seeking an answer to it. Of course, the majority of the religious world, represented by the different denominational groups, all voice their opinion that the church is not really important, and that it is not necessary to be a member of the church to be saved. But what does the Bible say?

People in general have heard so much about the church, in the sense of denominational churches, that most of them have closed or prejudiced minds concerning the church. Although they may be a member of some denomination, once you begin to talk about the church, often they want to end the conversation right there. They figure that you are merely

trying to push your own church on them, and they are not interested in hearing about another church. What these people need to realize is that we must go to the Bible for the truth about the church. I believe, if we will go to the Bible to see what it says, we will find the church of the Scriptures will be far different from what we find in the denominational world.

When you stop to consider all of the many different denominational group, the division they represent, the many man-made teachings that they propagate, the fact that they themselves advocate that the church is not important, etc., you wonder how any of the man-made denominations still exist. As in other religions, many people blindly accept and follow whatever they are taught, but we must remember that the Lord has said that the blind lead the blind, and both fall into the ditch (Luke 6:39).

I would like to call you back to the Bible to consider the church that we find there. It is not man-made. It is not a denomination, or a group of denominations. It is not a church building. It is not a club, or a social group. But it is the church of my Lord, made up of those who have obeyed His teaching. Christ promised the apostles, after they acknowledged Him as the Son of God, ***"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"*** (Matthew 16:18). The rock was the fact that Christ was the Son of God, and His church would be built on that foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11). He said that He would not allow death, or anything else, to keep Him from building His church on schedule. Thus, in Acts 2, Peter and the apostles preached the Gospel to a large crowd of people on the day of Pentecost, and as a result of this, some three thousand believed in the Lord, repented of their sins, and were baptized. Therefore, they received the remission of their sins, received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the Lord added those who were being saved to the church. Which church? The one that He promised to build — His church.

In Acts 20:28 Paul said to the elders of the church at Ephesus, ***"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."*** Before going further, let me ask this question: Do you think the Lord would promise to build something, and even to be willing to shed His blood to purchase it, if it was not really important? Surely not.

Paul said, ***"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish"*** (Ephesians 5:23-27).

Now, what is Paul saying here? He is telling us of the importance of the church, of the relationship it has with Christ. He says that Christ is the head of it, the saviour of it, that He died for it, that it is washed in water by the word — which has reference to its members being baptized for the remission of sins — and that Christ will come back for it one day to receive a glorious church, a faithful church, one that is holy and without blemish. Let me ask you again: Do you think that Christ would be the head of something, the saviour of it, giving His very life for it, cleanse it, and plan to come back for something that is not important?

Furthermore, do you think that after He did all of that for the church — His church — that He would be pleased if you decide that you can be saved outside the church, or in some denominational church? As a matter of fact, if Christ is the saviour of *the body,* which is the church, then where do you suppose you would have to be in order to be saved? But you might say that you do not believe that the church is the saviour. I do not believe that either, and the Scriptures do not teach that the church is the saviour. It teaches rather that **Christ is the saviour,** and that **He is saviour <u>of the body, the church.</u>** That means that if we are to be saved, we must be members of His church. That is why the Scriptures also say that when one obeys God, and he is saved, then the Lord adds him to the church (Acts 2:47). But someone is ready to say, "I am saved and I am not a member of any church." According to the scriptures that is impossible. It is true that you may be saved without being a member of some denominational church, but you cannot be saved without being a member of the Lord's church. If you are saved, then the Lord has added you to His church. If you are not a member of it, then you are not saved.

How many churches are there? Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:4 that

there is but *one body.* What is the body? In Colossians 1:18 he says that **the body is the church,** and in Ephesians 1:22,23 he says that **the church is the body.** So either way you look at it, it amounts to the same. The church is the body, or the body is the church. But if there is but one body, and it is the church, then that means that there is but one church. Which one is that? The one Christ promised to build, the one He died for, the one that He shed His blood for, the one He is head of, the one and only church that you can read about in the scriptures. Now you may be saved without being a member of the churches of men but *you cannot be saved outside the Lord's church.*

What is the name of the church? If Christ promised to build it, and did build it, if He died for it, if He shed His blood to purchase it, if He is the head of it, and if it is His bride, then guess whose name it would wear? Naturally, it would wear **the name of Christ.** And so it is called **the body of Christ** in 1 Corinthians 12 and in Romans 16:16, in speaking of it as being different congregations, it is referred to as **the churches of Christ.** Its members are called *Christians,* according to Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16. How could the church wear a man-made name, and how could its members wear sectarian names, and yet claim to belong to the Lord? The bride must wear the name of the groom, and the individual members must also wear His name.

In John 17:20-23 Christ prayed to the Father, ***"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."***

What do you think the Lord was praying for? He said that He wasn't praying for the apostles only, but also for all of those who would believe in Him. What was His prayer for all of these believers? That they might all be *one* — united — even as He and the Father were one, and that as a result the world might believe that the Father had sent Him. Do you suppose the Lord still feels this way about us being one? You can be sure that this is true. Actually, this continues to be His prayer. We can help to answer this prayer by striving for the unity for which He prayed.

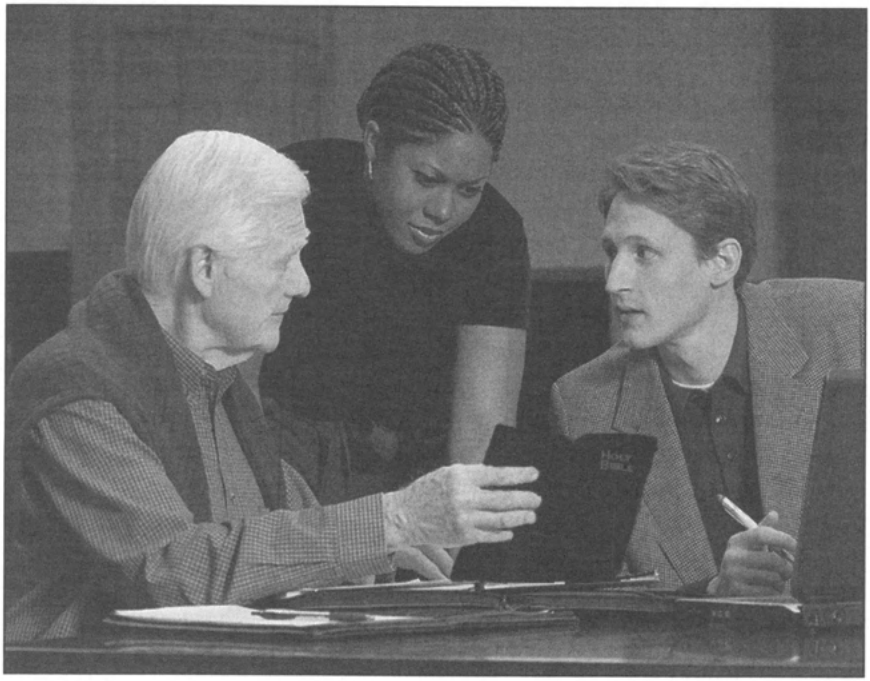
Again we come back to the question, "Can one be saved outside the church?" We would have to say, on the basis of what the word of God says, that it is impossible to be saved without being a member of the Lord's church. One may be lost as a member, if he is not a faithful member, but for sure, there is no hope for that person who is not a member.

I want to encourage you to investigate the church of Christ. Go to the Bible itself to read about it. There the Lord reveals everything that He wants you to know about that church; how to be a member of it, how to worship as a member, the work it is to do, etc. If you are not a member of it, then you need to become a member. If you are a member of some church that you cannot read about in the Bible, then you need to realize that it does make a difference as to what church you are a member of.

As an illustration, does a man go down a street and gather up every woman living in every house and take them home as his "wives"? No! Neither does the Lord gather up all the churches that men have begun and take them home to Heaven as His "brides". **He has only one bride, His body, His church, that wears His name.**

Once you know what the Bible teaches, how can you dare consider another church? Remember, I am not asking you to be a member of *my* church, because I don't have a church, but I am pleading with you to be a member of the church of Christ.

If everyone would obey the Gospel, as clearly taught in the New Testament, there would be only one church — the Lord's church. Every denominational church in existence today is a counterfeit church, an imitation church, and is a monument to the fact that most people had rather follow the teachings of men than to obey the will of the Lord. One day every plant, or church, that the Lord has not planted shall be rooted up.



Chapter 14

Is the Conscience a Safe Guide?

The question is asked, "Is the conscience a safe guide?" Many feel that it is, and rely solely on it to take them through life. As long as what they are doing does not hurt their conscience they feel that they are doing right. But feelings can deceive us, so we must go to the Bible to see what it says about this matter.

What is the conscience? If we are thinking in terms of the conscience leading, guiding, or directing us, then we must know what it is, because that is a very important task. The conscience is that part of the mind that contains knowledge — provided we have been taught properly — of both the good and bad, that which is right and that which is wrong, and then it serves as a safeguard to protect us from doing that which is bad, evil, and wrong. In other words, when we do good our conscience approves and we feel good. When we do something wrong, our conscience

hurts because we know we have sinned. In this way the conscience serves as a warning system to tell us, or to warn us, when we are getting over into an area where we should not be. It is a protective system to keep us on the right road.

There is just one big problem with all of this, and that is, the conscience operates on the knowledge that has been stored up over the years. If one has been *taught* that something is right, when it is actually wrong, then the conscience will accept it as right. Or if one has been taught that something is wrong, although it is right, then the conscience will accept it as wrong. For example, Paul dealt with this problem in 1 Corinthians 8.

In Paul's lengthy statement, the point is made that it is possible for one to think a thing is wrong, when in reality it is not. In Paul's day there were temples to various idols, and sacrifices were made to them, and then some of the meat was sold in the markets. He said that as far as the meat itself was concerned, there was nothing wrong in eating it because the idols were nothing. But for those new Christians who believed that to eat meat that had been offered to idols would be a sin, they would be violating their conscience if they ate. Furthermore, he stressed the fact that even though there was no sin involved in eating this meat, still the stronger Christian should not do so if it meant that a weaker brother would see it and be offended by it. Paul concluded by saying, ***"Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble"*** (1 Corinthians 8:13). For Paul, his conscience did not forbid him to eat this meat, but for others, their conscience would not allow them to so eat. Paul's conclusion was that if any act of his might offend the conscience of a brother, he would abstain.

All of this is to say that the conscience is what it is because of the teaching an individual has received. He may be properly taught, or he may be improperly taught, but the conscience will approve or disapprove of what is done, or not done, depending on its training. It is conditioned, therefore, to act accordingly.

If a person has been taught error, and he accepts that error as truth, his conscience will approve of the error. He will feel that he is doing right, even though he is doing wrong. He will feel that he is saved, when in reality he is lost. He will think he is going to heaven, when he does not have any assurance of heaven from God's word.

Or a person may have been taught the truth on the Old Testament law itself, and even though there has been a change of laws, which makes the law that he is keeping no longer valid, still he may have a good conscience in keeping that law, because he believes that it is still binding. The Apostle Paul is a good example of this. In Acts 8 and 9 we read where he persecuted Christians before he became a Christian himself. But he had been brought up under the Law of Moses, and he really believed that this was God's law for man, and that anything else was wrong. When he learned the truth and obeyed it, he said, ***"Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities"*** (Acts 26:9-11). Paul meant by this that he did all of these things in good conscience. He really believed he was doing God's will. Of course, he found out that he was wrong, and therefore he obeyed the Lord and became a Christian himself.

Another example of this is in Acts 8 where the Ethiopian eunuch had been all the way to Jerusalem to worship according to the law. He was a proselyte, but a very religious, dedicated man. A man of authority back in his own country, he had traveled more than a thousand miles to worship. He had a difficult trip. But even though all of this was so, on his way home he was still reading from the Scripture as he was riding along in his chariot. The angel of the Lord directed Philip to go to him, and we read, ***"So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And he said, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture which he read was this: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth. So the eunuch answered Philip and said, 'I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?' Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road,***

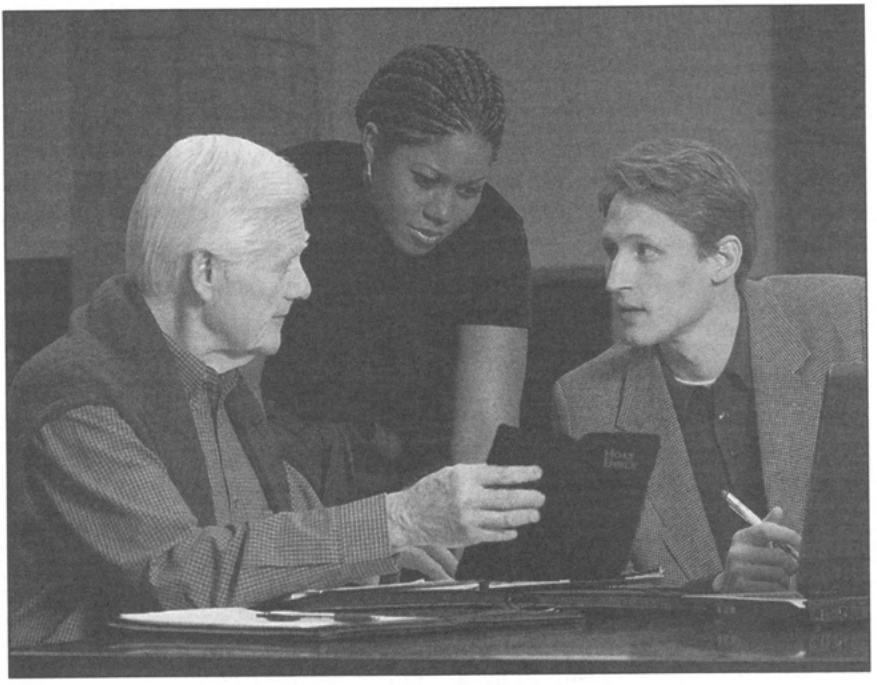
they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:30-39). Now do you suppose the eunuch had a good conscience before he obeyed Christ? Of course he did, because he was operating on the knowledge that he had of right and wrong. But once he learned the truth of God concerning Christ and salvation, his conscience prompted him to obey the Lord.

We are told that we are to have a good conscience (1 Timothy 1:5,19). That is, when we know God's will, and abide by it, then we have a good conscience. At the same time, it is possible to sear the conscience, or to kill it (1 Timothy 4:2). That is the end result when you know right from wrong but you go on opposing your conscience to the point that it no longer hurts when you do wrong. This is a dangerous state to be in. Paul says, ***"To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled"*** (Titus 1:15).

Peter said, ***"Having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil"*** (1 Peter 3:16,17). In other words, we can take a lot from others, as long as we know that we are doing right, as long as we have a good conscience, but when we know that we are being evil spoken of because of our wrong deeds, then this can really hurt because our conscience is likewise telling us that we are wrong.

To sum up what we have been saying, let us make it clear that the conscience is solely dependent on the type of information it has been given. As a result, it may guide us in the right direction, or in the wrong direction, again depending on the kind of teaching it has received. Always, in order for the conscience to be a safe guide, it must be following the truth, governed entirely by God's will.

The conscience is a very delicate part of a person's mental make-up. It can be mistaught, hurt, defiled, seared, and destroyed. It can be a means of warning us, helping us, encouraging us, and blessing us if it has been properly taught, conditioned, and used. Remember, the conscience — apart from God's will — is not a safe guide. It may tell you that you are right when you are in error. Don't take comfort in the fact that you have a good conscience unless it has been thoroughly schooled in God's word. Understand what the Scriptures teach about salvation, the church, the Christian life, and all other things that pertain to life and godliness. In building up a Bible knowledge, and allowing the conscience to be governed by that knowledge, it will guide you to obey the Lord and to live the Christian life. Your feelings will then be based on knowledge rather than mere emotions. Don't be deceived for a minute into thinking that you can rely on your conscience and feelings to guide you *without* this Bible knowledge.



Chapter 15

Does the Bible Teach Foreordained Predestination?

What is the answer to the question, "Does the Bible teach foreordained predestination?" There are those who believe that God has foreordained and predestined each individual to either be saved or to be lost. That is, they believe that, even before the foundation of the world, God decided the eternal destiny of each soul. If this be true, then salvation is not left to the individual. He cannot decide whether he will obey God or not, and even if he did, it wouldn't change his relationship with God. It means that, if this doctrine is true, an individual could want to be saved but if God had decided that he should be lost there would be nothing he could do to change his destination. Does the Bible teach this? What does it say?

First of all, the Bible **does** teach that we have been foreordained and predestined! The Apostle Peter said, ***"Knowing that you were not***

redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1 Peter 1:18-21).

Further, the Apostle Paul wrote the Romans, ***"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For who He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover who He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified: and whom He justified, these He also glorified"*** (Romans 8:28-30).

To the Ephesian Christians Paul wrote, ***"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved"*** (Ephesians 1:3-6). He said, ***"In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory"*** (Ephesians 1:11,12).

What are these writers saying in all of these statements? Keep in mind that they are speaking to Christians, those who are in Christ, and they are saying that they are Christians because they have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are called. They are saying that they have been foreordained and predestined, and chosen before the foundation of the world. But you will notice that, in all of these statements, not one time do they say that *God decided before the foundation of the world to specifically save an individual, or to condemn an individual, without giving him any say in*

the matter whatsoever. It does say that God chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world. But how does one get into Christ? Through baptism (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27). Who is baptized? The one who obeys the Gospel to be saved, as recorded in Mark 16:16. To whom is the Gospel to be preached? To the whole world, to every creature, to every person (Mark 16:15,16). So these statements are saying that before the foundation of the world God chose a class of people to be saved and a class of people to be lost. He chose the **righteous** to be saved, and He chose the **wicked** to be lost. Then He left it to each individual to decide which group he would become a part of.

So, based on these Scriptures we can say that *before the foundation of the world God foreordained and predestined the righteous to be saved, and the wicked to be lost.* Since the righteous are found in Christ, that is why Paul talks so much about the predestined souls being in Christ.

Paul also talks about those who have been called, and then in 2 Thessalonians 2:14 he tells us that we have been called by the Gospel. But as we noticed earlier, the Lord himself said that the Gospel should be preached to the whole world, even to every creature of the whole world (Mark 16:15,16). So every soul has been called by the Gospel to come to God.

Another word that is akin to the ones we have been discussing is "election". Peter speaks of himself and others as being ***"elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace be multiplied"*** (1 Peter 1:2). In speaking to the Christians at Thessalonica Paul says, ***"Knowing, beloved brethren, your election of God"*** (1 Thessalonians 1:4). Paul also writes to the Colossian Christians, to Timothy, and to Titus: ***"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering"*** (Colossians 3:12). ***"Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"*** (2 Timothy 2:10). ***"Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness"*** (Titus 1:1).

What does it mean to be classified as God's elect? It means to be chosen of God, to be the Lord's, to be a saved people. He also chose,

and elected, before the foundation of the world to save the righteous, and to condemn the wicked. That is why we are spoken of as "the chosen", "the elect of God", as "Christians", because *we* have chosen to be counted among the righteous, and *we* have elected to be members of the Lord's family.

The Bible clearly teaches that God has left it up to man to decide whether he will accept Him, or reject Him. This was done with Adam and Eve and all others since then. Some go to Jacob and Esau to try to support the theory that individuals are predestinated to be what they are without them having any choice in the matter, but if you will study their case in Romans 9 and their story in Genesis 25-33 you will observe that by their own actions they put themselves into God's overall plan. They were not forced to assume these roles. The same could be said about Judas. He did not have to betray Christ, but he chose to do so himself. Judas fell, but it was by his own transgression (Acts 1:25).

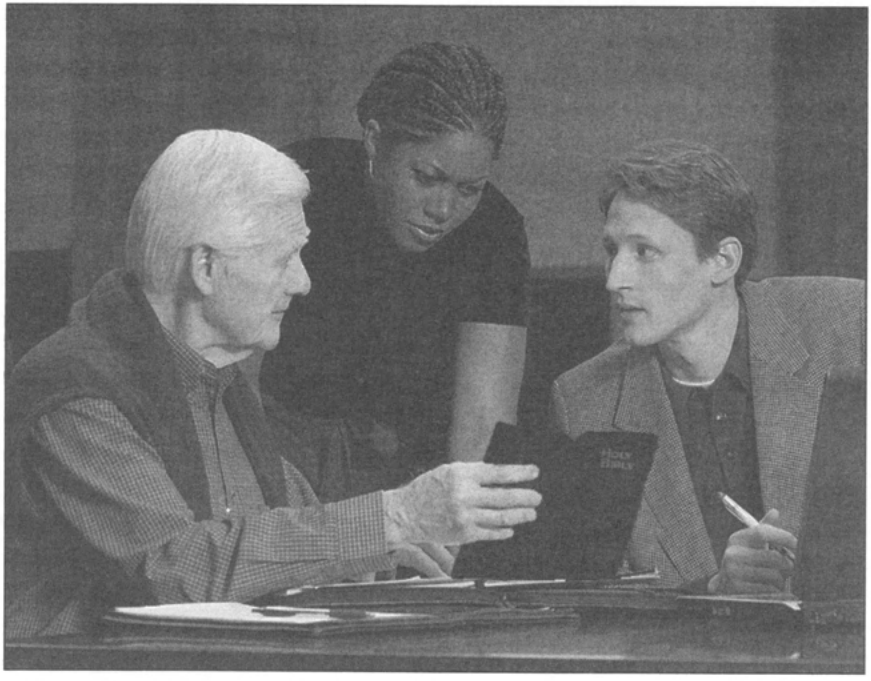
There are many today who believe that their destiny is set and it cannot be changed. They believe whatever will be, will be. They believe that when it comes their time to die they will die. Of course this is not true. God has placed within man the freedom to choose what he will do. He can obey God, or disobey Him. He can leave sin and become a Christian; or even as a Christian, he can decide to deny his Master. It is up to each one to decide what he wants to do. God does not force Himself on anyone.

The whole of God's word points in the direction of informing man of the good and bad, of truth and error, of heaven and hell. Christ said there is a narrow way and a broad way, and it is left to each one to choose which road he will travel (Matthew 7:13,14). The Lord invited all to come to Him (Matthew 11:28-30). The Gospel is to be preached to all, and Christ said, ***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"*** (Mark 16:16). He also said that if we will confess Him before men, He will confess us before the Father in heaven, but if we deny Him before men, He will deny us before His Father (Matthew 10:32,33).

So in the end its up to each one to decide what he will do. If a person is lost it will not be because it is the Lord's choice, but it will be because he, himself, decided not to be obedient to God. God sent His Son to die on the cross that the world might not be condemned, but that it might

be saved (John 3:16,17). Paul said that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). We also read that the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

God has chosen to save the righteous, but to destroy the wicked. If you want to be saved you must decide that you are going to obey God, so that you can be counted among the righteous. You can do that by believing in God, repenting of your sins, confessing Christ as the Son of God, and being baptized to be saved, and to be added to the Lord's church. If you refuse to obey God it means that you have chosen to be counted among the wicked, and if you die in that state you will be lost. Remember, the choice is yours to make.



Chapter 16

Can a Child of God So Sin As to Finally be Lost?

At this time let us consider the important question, "Can a child of God so sin as to finally be lost?" There is a great deal of misunderstanding on this subject. "Once saved, always saved" is popularly taught. The explanation is made that if one is saved he cannot be lost, and if he is lost, then that means that he was never saved. There are some who even go so far as to say that it is impossible for one who is saved to sin. But what does the Bible teach?

It is true that a Christian *should* not sin, but even a Christian is a human being. He is subject to mistakes and errors, and to fail at times. He is not perfect. He has the Lord's promise that with every temptation there is a way of escape. If the Christian purposely or intentionally sins, he is lost. To say that once a person is saved, he is always saved, or that

the Christian cannot sin, takes away from him the freedom of choice and the ability to decide whether he will be faithful or not. Actually, most of the New Testament is directed to the Christian, to encourage him to do all the things that he should do as a child of God, to shun sin and evil, and in general to live the faithful Christian life so that he can go to heaven. But the question is, why is all of this exhortation necessary if it is impossible for the Christian to sin and be lost? But what if he does sin? Will he be saved in spite of his sin? What does the Bible say?

Let us notice some verses of Scripture that will help us to see the truth on this subject. Paul said, ***"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall"*** (1 Corinthians 10:12). But why would Paul warn Christians to be careful lest they fall if it was impossible to fall? Again he said, ***"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace"*** (Galatians 5:4). If a sinful Christian has "fallen from grace", is he lost?

Continuing, let God's word speak: ***"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit"*** (John 15:4). ***"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock"*** (Acts 20:29).

The Apostle John wrote to the Christians of his day, ***"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us"*** (1 John 1:8-10). John says that if we say we have not sinned we deceive ourselves, the truth is not in us, and we make God a liar. He says, however, that if we will confess our sins, the Lord is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins.

But someone says, "What about John's statement in 1 John 3 saying that a child of God cannot sin?" Let's read it: ***"Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God"*** (1 John 3:9). How would we harmonize this verse and similar verses, with all of those other verses that say that it is *possible* for a Christian to sin? We just read where John says if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Surely God's word does not contradict itself. It appears to do so some-

times, but that is because we don't always understand it. In this particular verse John is saying that a faithful Christian *cannot* sin, in the sense that he doesn't want to. He knows that he cannot do that which is wrong, and still please God. It does not mean, however, that it is *impossible* for one to *choose* to sin. For example, as a Christian I cannot drink strong drink, use bad language, indulge in immoral practices, etc. I cannot do such things and remain a faithful Christian. Now does that mean that it is *impossible* for me to do those things? No, not at all. I can *choose* to do those things, but in doing them I become unfaithful to the Lord. That's what John is talking about.

In Luke 15 we have the story of the Prodigal Son. He was with his father, had everything that he could want, but he decided to take his inheritance and leave. Please notice that he wasn't forced to stay or to go. But he chose to go, so he went out and spent all he had in riotous living. Then he found himself without anything. To survive he had to take a job feeding swine, and was even forced to eat the husks that the pigs ate.

But the record continues, ***"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.' And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry"*** (Luke 15:17-24). This depicts the Lord and His church, and one of the members who goes back into the world. Finding himself in sin and despair, he decides to return to the Lord and His people, and he is welcomed home with much rejoicing.

Of course there are other cases where children of God sinned and fell away. There was Judas who betrayed the Lord and went out and

hanged himself (John 13:27; Matthew 27:5). We also read of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. They were Christians, but as a result of lying to the Holy Spirit concerning the amount of money they were giving, they both fell down and died.

In Acts 8 we read about Simon the Sorcerer: ***"But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is the great power of God.' And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.***

"Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.' But Peter said to him, 'Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.' Then Simon answered and said, 'Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me'" (Acts 8:9-24). From this story we would conclude that Simon was forgiven and restored to God.

James tells us, ***"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much"*** (James 5:16).

We read, ***"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life"*** (Revelation 2:10). But what if one is not faithful unto death? Will

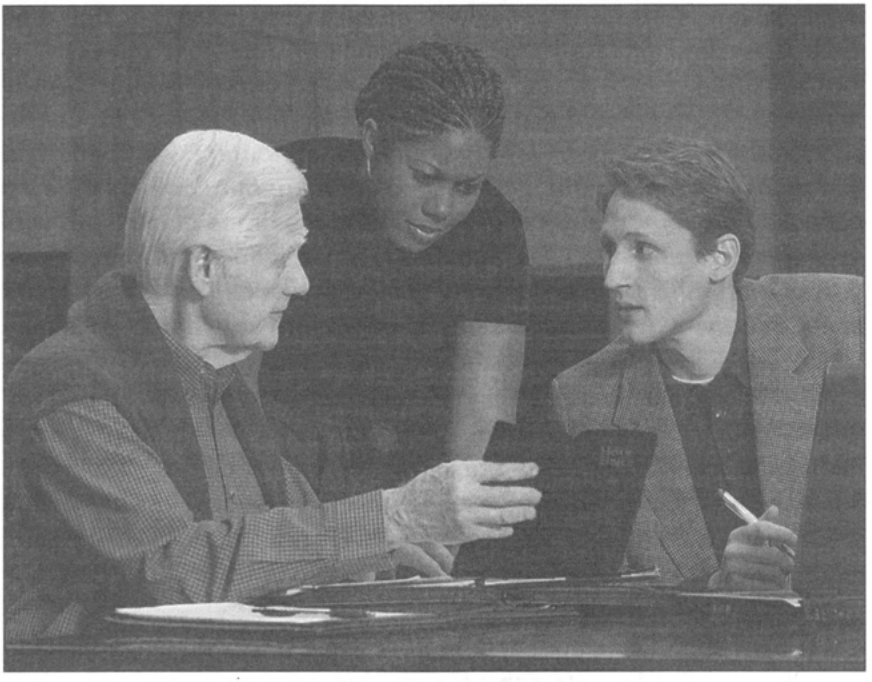
he still be saved? It seems that it would have been unnecessary to give so many exhortations to be faithful if it was impossible for one to so sin as to finally be lost.

The Hebrew writer warns, ***"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?"*** (Hebrews 10:24-29).

We are not saying that it is necessary for a child of God to go back into sin. Certainly, he should not. But we are saying that it is *possible* for him to sin. That is why there are so many examples, warnings, and exhortations on this subject.

Yes, a child of God can sin, and if his sin is unrepented of, he will be eternally lost.

Are you a Christian? As a Christian, you must be faithful to the Lord all the days of your life in order to receive eternal life.



Chapter 17

Does It Matter How You Worship?

When we turn to the Bible, we note that our worship to God is very important. But someone is ready to ask, "Does it really matter how you worship, just as long as you are honest and sincere?" Those who would ask this question are the ones who believe that there are many ways to worship, many ways to Heaven, and that specifics don't matter much if one is trying to be "honest and sincere". They feel that one person can worship one way, and another can worship in some other way, and still be acceptable. Their idea is that it really doesn't matter how you worship, if your *intention* is to worship God. What does the Bible teach on this?

First, it should be pointed out that it is possible for one to be honestly and sincerely mistaken in many things, and this includes worship. I believe that Saul, who later became Paul, was honest and sincere in his opposition to the Lord's cause (Acts 9). I am also sure that while he was persecuting Christians, he was worshiping God on a regular basis, accord-

ing to the law of Moses. But Saul was mistaken, and because of all that he did in those days to destroy the Lord's church, he later spoke of himself as the chief of sinners. Listen to what he said of that period of his life: ***"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief"*** (1 Timothy 1:12-15). Saul was worshiping sincerely, but he was wrong!

Then what about the Ethiopian eunuch who had been all the way to Jerusalem to worship according to the law, and while on his way back, Philip preached Christ to him, and he was converted (Acts 8:26-39)? Surely he was honest and sincere in his worship to God, before he became a Christian. But still that was not enough. He needed to have the proper relationship with God, and he needed to worship in the way the Lord had instructed, if his worship was to be acceptable to God.

Second, it is important to be honest and sincere in our worship to God, but it is also important that we worship the right one — and that is God Himself — and that we worship Him *in the way* He has asked us to do. Why should we bother with worship, if obedience to God is not our intention? If our goal is to only please ourselves, or to be seen of men, then our intentions and motives are foreign to the teaching of God's will. Really, the only way you can be honest and sincere in worship, provided you have learned the truth about worship, is to worship in the way that the Lord has instructed.

Many people worship God, but their worship is either in *ignorance* and *superstition* (Acts 17:22-31), or else they worship *according to the doctrines and commandments of men* (Matthew 15:9). While in both instances, their worship may be honestly and sincerely done, yet it is unacceptable to God because it is not the kind of worship He wants. To think for a minute that all that God requires in worship is honesty and sincerity, one is sadly mistaken.

Jesus and the Samaritan woman had a conversation about worship. She said, ***"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say***

that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth'" (John 4:20-24). Of course, the Samaritans had one way to worship and the Jews worshiped in another way, according to the law. The Samaritans worshiped in the mountain where they lived, and the Jews worshiped in Jerusalem. With the coming of Christ, and the giving of the New Testament, all of that was to be changed.

Under the New Testament God's people would be able to worship Him with the church wherever they happened to be. Worship would not be restricted to a country, city, or even a building. God, Himself, would be the object of worship and He would seek true worshipers. One and all would be invited to obey Him and to worship Him in spirit and in truth. "Spirit" here would involve sincerity, humility, attitude, and reverence and respect for God. Truth would demand that the worship be according to God's word in all honesty. Notice that those who worship God **MUST** worship in this way. The Lord will accept no less.

What does God require of those who would worship Him?

First, *we must obey His teaching so that we may be saved,* His children, in a faithful relationship with Him. How can one worship God when he has not obeyed Him, and God is not his Father? After some three thousand people had obeyed the Gospel on the day of Pentecost, the record goes on to say, ***"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers"*** (Acts 2:42). John wrote, ***"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son"*** (2 John 9). Again Paul says, ***"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"*** (Galatians 3:26,27).

Second, God requires that we worship Him on a specified day, *the first day of the week.* In Acts 20:7 we have an example of the early Chris-

tians meeting on the first day of the week to worship: ***"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight"*** (Acts 20:7). Also, in 1 Corinthians 16:1,2, Paul said that Christians are to give of their means on the first day of the week, or on the day that we call Sunday.

What does the Lord require in the worship itself? As we read through the New Testament and observe the way the early Christians worshiped, and as we read the various instructions that pertain to worship, we observe that there are five acts of worship, or five avenues, through which we are to honor our Father in our worship to Him.

First, we are instructed to assemble for the purpose of **studying God's word.** It is through reading and studying the Scriptures that God speaks to reveal His will to us. Paul says, ***"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"*** (2 Timothy 2:15).

Second, we are taught that we should assemble to **pray to God.** This is our way of speaking to our Father. The early Christians continued in prayer (Acts 2:42). Paul said that we should pray without ceasing, to have a prayerful mind, emphasizing the importance of prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Again, he said, ***"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God"*** (Philippians 4:6).

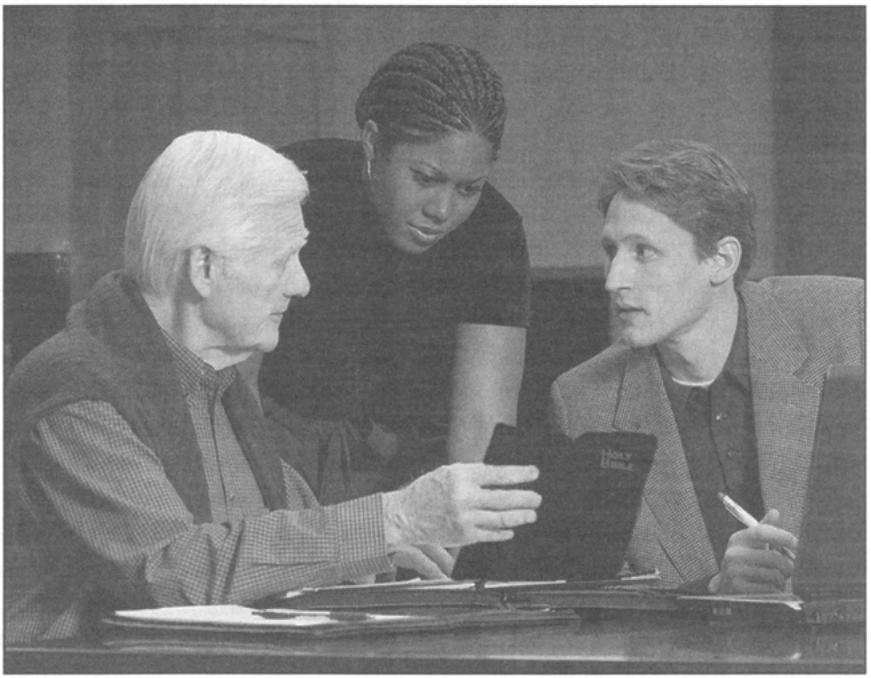
Third, Christians are to gather on the first day of the week to **sing praises to God.** The religion of Christ is a singing religion. One of the unique things about the type of worship God specifies is that *He wants His creation to praise Him, not our creations!* That means, in our singing, we are to use **vocal** music only — **singing without the accompaniment of mechanical instruments that we have made!** Paul said, ***"...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"*** (Ephesians 5:19). He also said, ***"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"*** (Colossians 3:16). Most people who attempt to worship God insist that mechanical music be used, but who is to be pleased — God or man? *And how can the*

words of our singing "teach and admonish one another" if they cannot be heard and understood because of the accompanying band, organ, or piano? If our worship is to be accepted, it must be **according to the truth,** as He has specified. Otherwise our worship will be rejected.

Fourth, Christians assemble on the first day of the week to remember Christ's death on the cross by partaking of the Lord's Supper. We have this command in Matthew 26:26-28, and an example of it in Acts 20:7 which clearly states the primary reason for which the early Christians assembled: ***"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight."*** Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, ***"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.'"*** Christians are to remember the sacrifice of our Lord each first day of the week, on every Sunday, by partaking of the bread which represents His body, and the fruit of the vine which memorializes His blood.

Fifth, when Christians come together each first day of the week they are to give of their earnings. We read, ***"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come"*** (1 Corinthians 16:2). In 2 Corinthians 9:7 we are told that we are to give as we have purposed in our hearts, and that we are to give cheerfully, ***"... not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver."*** These contributions are to be used by the church to preach the Gospel, to help those who are in need, and to do other good works.

These are the things God requires of His people as they worship Him. Any additions or subtractions will not be approved by God. Those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is to be honestly and sincerely done, but on His terms.



Chapter 18

Are Miracles Being Performed Today?

In the religious world, we are being bombarded by many claims that miracles can be performed today. This kind of publicity brings huge crowds to so-called miracle campaigns. But you will notice that these people get the crowds, get the money, but those that need to be healed of their diseases do not get the miracles. Some who have psychological ills, who believe in this type of thing, are the only ones who leave believing that they have been healed. You do not see any new arms or legs being put on, or any new eyes being given to the blind, or any of the dead being raised. Why not? A miracle is a miracle. If the Lord is healing people today miraculously, He could raise the dead as easily as He could heal a back ache. I want you to seriously think about that.

The question for our study at this time is, "Are miracles being performed today?" The question is not, *can* the Lord perform miracles,

but *does* He perform miracles today? Those who claim to believe in miracles for our present age deny that *they* are able to do these things, but they claim that *the Lord* is doing these works. If they are **challenged** to perform a miracle in a particular instance, they say that **we are tempting the Lord.** If they try to do some miracle and nothing happens, they say that **the person on whom the work was to be performed did not have enough faith.** These are escape mechanisms for false teachers and false claims.

What is a miracle? A miracle is that which is contrary to the law of nature, or beyond the law of nature. God created man and woman miraculously in the beginning. Then He set the law of nature to work, and through that law man and woman come together in marriage to procreate, or to reproduce. This reproduction is not a miracle. God could continue to create human beings out of the dust of the earth, but He has not chosen to do so. But if a child in this day and age was conceived and born outside the law of nature, that would be a miracle. The same is true with giving sight to the blind, giving new arms and legs, raising the dead, etc. The Lord did these things during His ministry, and many believed because of His obvious power over the "law of nature". If He was performing miracles today through these "miracle-proclaiming preachers", He — through them — would be doing those same astounding things. Why is this not happening?

In answer, let us consider, "What was the purpose of miracles?" In the beginning the use of miraculous power was the means of creating everything. But then, as already pointed out, God set the law of nature into force to reproduce various things after their kind. That brought an end to miraculous creations, because there was no longer a need.

Through the centuries miracles were performed on different occasions, but always for a purpose. For instance, during the days of Christ, miracles were performed by Himself and by His apostles **to confirm the word.** There were many false teachers at that time, even as there are today, but to prove that Christ and his apostles were of God, and not impostors, they performed miracles that were beyond the power of ordinary humans to do. The miracles that Christ performed were never questioned by those who witnessed them. Some questioned *Him;* some even claimed that He did His works *by the power of Satan.* But the majority were con-

vinced that He was from God by the miracles He did. He walked on the water, calmed the sea, changed water into wine, healed all manner of diseases, gave sight to the blind, unstopped the ears of the deaf, gave speech to the dumb, and raised the dead. ***"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him'"*** (John 3:1,2). The apostles were also able to perform miracles: ***"And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs"*** (Mark 16:20).

Were miracles ever performed just for the sake of doing miracles? **Never.** Even the sick, and all others who were healed, were not healed for the sole purpose of making them well. They were miraculously healed to convince those who were witnesses that the Lord was able to do these things through the power of God, convincing them that He was from God and that they must listen to His message.

Who had the power to perform miracles? A few of the prophets in the Old Testament era were empowered to do miracles, but not every one. Jeremiah, for instance, preached mightily, but there is no record of any miracle being done by him.

Christ, during His ministry, did many miracles, proving that He was the Son of God and the giver of the new Law. By His authority, His apostles were able to do miraculous works through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit upon the apostles for this purpose. In John 14:26, Christ said to the apostles, ***"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."*** Again, Christ said to the apostles, ***"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come"*** (John 16:13).

The Holy Spirit was poured out on them on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, and through this power they were able to speak in the languages of those who were present, and then we read, ***"Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles"*** (Acts 2:43). Again we read, ***"And through the hands of***

the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch" (Acts 5:12).

Who was promised the power of the Holy Spirit? The apostles. Who had the power to speak in other languages and to do signs and wonders? The apostles. Anyone else? None, until later, in Acts 6:1-6, when certain ones were chosen on whom the apostles laid their hands, that they might also have miraculous powers to enable them to help with the great work of the church. We read of it also in Acts 8 when Peter and John went down to Samaria to lay their hands on some of the Samaritans, to impart unto them this power, that they might be guided by the Holy Spirit in their development as Christians and in their teaching of others, since they had no written Scriptures to guide them. Christians in general did not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit or the laying on of the apostles' hands to have miraculous power. They received only the gift of the Holy Spirit, which did not carry with it the power to perform miracles (Acts 2:38).

How long did these miraculous things continue? Until the apostles, and those on whom they laid their hands, had died. What was the reason for this? Before their death *the New Testament was not in written form,* but *by the time they had died it had been written.* Paul spoke of the time when the miraculous age would be no more. He said, ***"For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known"*** (1 Corinthians 13:9-12). Paul said that miraculous things were in part, or just for the present, but when that which was perfect was come — the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25), the word of God in completed form — then that which was in part, miraculous power, possessed by only select ones, would disappear because it would no longer be needed. He illustrated by saying that when he was a child he spoke as a child, etc., but when he became a man he put away childish things. That is, during the infancy of the church some special helps were needed — miraculous healings and the Holy Spirit's guidance in teaching God's will — but with the completion of the written word in the form of the New Testament, and with the church growing up and reaching maturi-

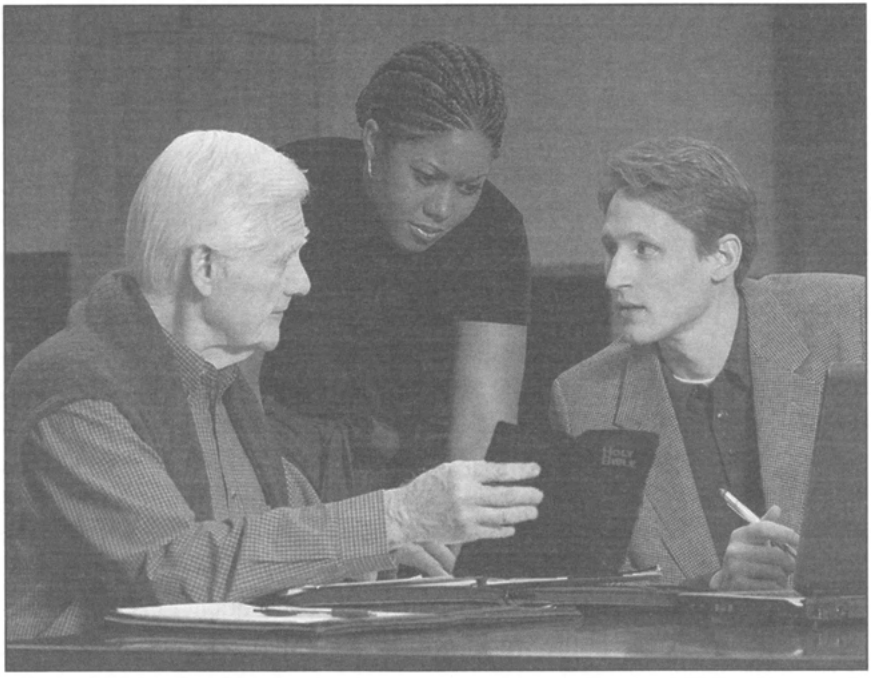
ty, the Lord's people would put away those childish miraculous things that had been used to prove that they spoke from God because there would no longer be a need for them. He illustrated by saying that as things were, it was like looking into a dark mirror, and not being able to see one's image clearly, but the day would come when one could look into God's great spiritual mirror, the New Testament, and see himself and his needs completely and clearly as they were. Therefore, Paul was simply pointing to the time when miraculous works would come to an end.

Are miracles being performed today? No, not even one. What would be the purpose of them? Has God made some new revelation that needs to be confirmed as His Word? No, the record of His will is complete according to the last chapter of the book of Revelation (22:18,19), and all men are forbidden to add anything to it.

Who would be benefited by miracles today? We have God's word now to reveal His will, and it has already been confirmed, proven, so we don't need a preacher to perform a miracle in order for us to know whether he is preaching God's will or not. We can compare his teaching with the Scriptures. As a matter of fact, this is exactly what John asked us to do: ***"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world"*** (1 John 4:1). John is saying that we should try the preachers, test them, check up on them, and see if they are what they claim to be. But someone says, "We need miracles to make believers out of the people." Paul says that **faith comes by hearing the word of God** (Romans 10:17).

Who are the ones who claim to perform miracles today? Those who are in churches that we cannot read about in the Bible, who wear man-made names, etc. Their preaching conflicts with the word of God, they oppose one another, and by their works they prove that they are not of God.

My friends, miracles are not being performed today. Be not deceived. That is not to deny the power of God, but to accept it. Those who claim that miracles are being performed only talk, but never produce. They end up with a big following and lots of wealth, but with nothing to prove their teaching and practices. They have no Scripture to support them and no genuine miracles to point to as evidence that they represent God. How easy it is to deceive people! How gullible they are to blindly follow such false teachers, without going to God's word to test them!



Chapter 19

Why Must Men Suffer?

This study will center around the question, "Why must men suffer?" The reason we are interested in this subject is because there is so much suffering in the world, both physically and spiritually. Many are asking where it all came from, and why it is necessary. There are large numbers of people who question God about this, and even accuse Him of being responsible for it. They say that if God is a God of love, mercy, and peace, then why does He allow all of this, why does He permit wars, etc.?

Let's begin by making it as plain as possible that God is not the one who is responsible for wars and all of the bad things in the world. Neither is He responsible for all the diseases, sorrows, heartbreaks, etc., that plague the world today. Don't blame all of that on God. Put the blame where it rightfully belongs — on man.

Going back to the beginning, God created man and placed him

in a beautiful garden where he could have everything. There was no sin, nothing to harm, or to destroy. Even the tree of life was there so that man could live forever. But God, seeing that it was not good for man to dwell alone, created a help-meet for him. That is, God made a woman. ***"And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed"*** (Genesis 2:23-25). But the story does not end there. God had already informed Adam, ***"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"*** (Genesis 2:16,17). Eve was likewise informed of this because when the serpent came to her to tempt her, she knew what God had said but she was tempted by the serpent to eat the forbidden fruit, and so was Adam, and consequently sin came into the world. It was not God's fault that this happened, but rather it was the act of Eve, and then of Adam. Both were responsible. Both had to suffer the consequences (Genesis 3).

Sin has been in the world ever since, and man has been suffering the consequences of sin throughout the ages. God wanted man to *choose* to do His will, to live without sin, and to live forever, praising and honoring His Creator. But when man and woman sinned, they were driven from the garden of Eden and from the tree of life. They now had the knowledge of good and evil. Because of their actions they died spiritually, and would die physically. Woman would suffer the pain of child birth, and her husband would rule over her. Man would have to labor to make his living by the sweat of his face. Sorrow after sorrow would be theirs, from this time on. Now who was responsible for all of this? God? Not God, but man and woman, the ones who had sinned.

So it has been through history right on down to the present time. Man's suffering is a result of sin, the consequences of sin. When a man goes out and murders another human being, there is suffering. God condemns that but there is suffering because man does it (Revelation 21:8). When one commits adultery, homes are broken, children are emotionally hurt for life, and souls are lost (Matthew 19:9; Galatians 5:19-21). When one gambles, drinks, is dishonest, and engages in the hundreds and thou-

sands of other things that are wrong, there is a price to pay. Is God responsible for all of the suffering that follows? God is not the one who has done these things. He has not forced anyone to do them. He has not even tempted anyone to do them. To the contrary, He warns against such things, and pleads with one and all to do what is right.

The Apostle Paul says, ***"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life"*** (Galatians 6:7,8). Again he warns, ***"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"*** (Romans 6:23).

There are always those who will point to God as being a God of love, and then they will ask why He would allow wars that kill hundreds and thousands of people. But again, God cannot be held responsible for the evil in this world. Who is responsible? Man. God is a God of love, and those who will obey Him and His teaching will not be responsible for wars, and they will not go out and kill. Rather, it is those who do not believe in God, or who are not willing to follow His teaching, who are responsible for all the killing and sufferings of war. Just suppose God did intervene and put a stop to all of the wars throughout the world. Suppose He did stop all of the murder, adultery, robbing, and the many other evils that are common to man. What would this mean? It would mean that man would no longer be a free moral agent, making his own choices. He would be a controlled being. He would be forced to conduct himself as God would have him to. His freedom would be gone. Would you want that? I doubt it.

God will certainly not step in and force Himself on man. He has given us His word, and if we will believe it, and follow its precepts, it can change us and make us better people, and the results will be that we will have a better life because of it. The challenge is getting people to hear God's word and to follow it. In order to educate humans concerning God's will, Christ commanded Christians to take the Gospel to all the world (Mark 16:15,16). Only through that method can evil be curtailed.

The fact is, we are in the world with sin and its consequences. The best we can do is to try to live as godly as we can, and to try to teach and influence as many others as possible to do the same. We cannot isolate

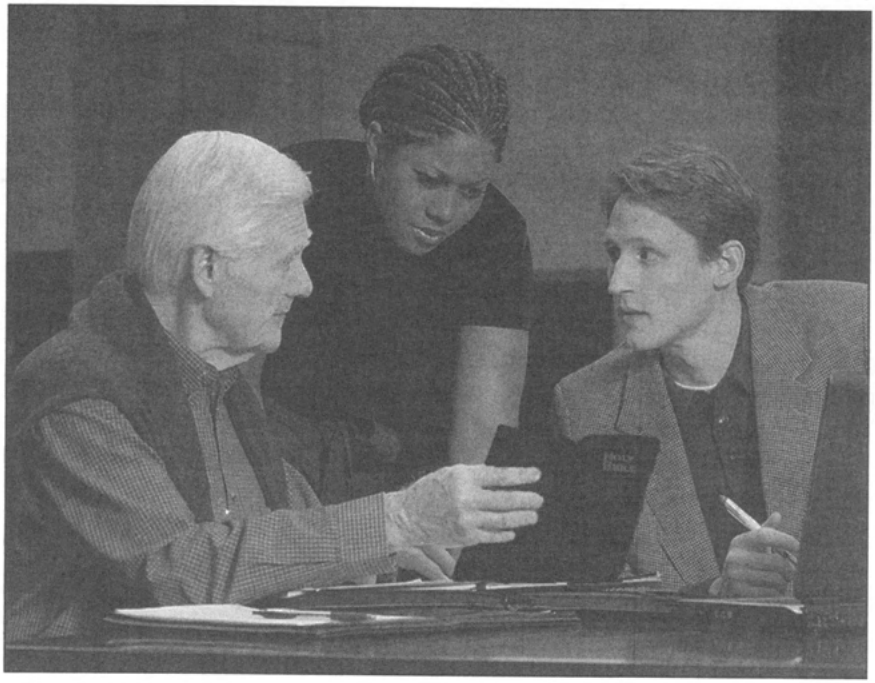
ourselves from all others, and make the situation better. To get away from the evils of this world, we would have to leave the world itself. Paul said, ***"I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world"*** (1 Corinthians 5:9,10).

So what are we going to do with all the bad that is in the world — sickness, diseases, etc.? Are we going to blame God, blame others, or blame one another? Will we close our eyes to what is around us, will we sit and feel sorry for ourselves? We can accept things as they are and gain from it. We can learn from all of these things, even from suffering. It can be a means of strengthening us, keeping us humble, recognizing our dependence on God, and even on one another. It can be a means of helping us to be more aware of the needs of others, and to give us a feeling of responsibility in helping those who are about us. The scriptures tell us to ***"... rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep"*** (Romans 12:15). As a matter of fact, Christianity comes to grips with the problem of suffering. The scriptures are literally filled with instructions on how to deal with our needs and the needs of others. What a difference it will make when we recognize this and begin to apply it to our lives!

For instance, Paul writes, ***"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose"*** (Romans 8:28). Here, the inspired man of God is telling us that if we belong to God and put Him first, all things that happen in our lives will work together for our good. We may not always understand why everything turns out the way it does, and we may not see how it could ever work out for our good, but it will, and that within itself brings consolation to our lives.

Be assured that God is going to take care of His people. He will bless them, help them, answer their prayers, if they are according to His will, be with them, provide a way of escape when temptation comes, and then when this life is over, He has promised to take us home to heaven. Those who do not belong to the Lord will receive some blessings along the way, but they will have to make it through life without many of those good and wonderful things that belong to God's people.

Are you a Christian? If not, you really don't know what you have been missing. Life at best for the non-Christian is a poor man's life. Life at its lowest ebb for the Christian is so far better than anything that the non-Christian has ever experienced. God wants you to be a Christian, but you are a free being. You may choose Him or reject Him, but it would be my prayer that you will obey God. He wants to save you and bless you if you will obey Him. He wants to bless all mankind, and change the world for better, but it is up to us to respond by obeying Him and following His teaching. He wants to remove from humanity so much of the suffering he is experiencing, and God can and will do this if we will look to Him for help, if we will obey Him, and if we will follow His instructions which lead to a better life, a better world, and to heaven itself.



Chapter 20

Has the Lord Revealed the Time of His Second Coming?

Our final study answers the question, "Has the Lord revealed the time of His second coming?" There is a lot of concern about this question because there are those who continue to set dates for the Lord's return, and for the destruction of the world. But what proofs and evidences can such people offer to justify their predictions?

Some of these go to various prophecies, numbers, and dates and try to unravel the time of the Lord's coming. Do such people really believe that this is possible? Are people so gullible, even religious people, that they go along with this type of thing? All those preachers and self-appointed leaders manage to do is to get a fleeting minute of attention. Once their prediction fails, that is the last you hear from them, but then there is always someone else who is ready to take the stage and do likewise.

Let it be understood that if the Lord really wanted you and me, and

people in general, to know the date of His second coming He would have clearly stated that in His word. He certainly wouldn't have kept it hidden or turned it into a game by allowing man to go through the Scriptures to find a clue here and there concerning His return. The fact is, He has not revealed that date, and in spite of the fact that some continue to come up with a date, this only marks them as false prophets. Jesus Himself said, ***"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but the Father only"*** (Matthew 24:36). Did you hear His words? He declared in no uncertain terms that no man knows the day or hour of His return, neither the angels, not even Christ Himself! He said that only God the Father knows the time. That should settle it once and for all, but know-it-all humans come along and reason that surely, regarding any day that is that important, the Lord would have given *a hint* somewhere in the word as to the time of His return.

What would be the purpose for man to know the hour of the Lord's second coming? It would certainly not serve a good purpose. It would only encourage man to be more wicked in the meantime. Many would reason that they could live in sin up to *near the time* of the Lord's coming, and then they could prepare to meet Him. But by not revealing the date, men cannot resort to such tactics. All of us must *stay prepared* if we expect to be ready when He returns. That is why both Paul and Peter said that the Lord will return as a thief in the night. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians, ***"For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape"*** (1 Thessalonians 5:2,3).

Peter said, ***"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless"*** (2 Peter 3:10-14). The idea of a thief is that he comes at an unannounced time,

when least expected. That is why we are asked to be prepared for that day.

When will the Lord come? Who can say? The apostles and early Christians spoke of the coming as though it was near at hand. Yet, almost two thousand years have come and gone, and still He has not come. He could come today, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year, ten years from now, or a thousand years from now. We just don't know. But the faithful Christian looks for Him daily as he strives to stay prepared to meet Him. In all of this we should remember — *time to the Lord is meaningless.* He has always existed and He will always exist. So time means nothing. Again, Peter reminds us, ***"But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day"*** (2 Peter 3:8). The danger is that one may let up in his faithfulness and think that the Lord will not come on this day or that day, and yet that might be the very day when He does come!

Christ will not come in secret, in spirit, or in a way that people will not be aware of His coming, as some false teachers have claimed, saying that He returned in AD 70, secretly! Instead, all will be aware of His coming. John wrote in Revelation 1:7, ***"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen."***

Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians about the Lord's coming. He said, ***"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. After thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words"*** (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We are given another picture in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: ***"And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not***

obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

Several things will happen when the Lord returns. Remember, He will come as a thief. He will come in the clouds, with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God. Those who are dead in Christ shall rise first and then those who are alive and remain will be caught up together to meet Him in the air. There is no indication in the Scripture that Christ will ever set foot on this earth again. Those who believe that He will return to set up an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem, and to reign on the earth a thousand years, are going to be disappointed when He does not follow that false doctrine. Instead, He will send His angels to gather out of His kingdom— the church, since it already exists (Hebrews 12:28) — all that offend, and they will be cast into hell (Matthew 13:41,42).

The Lord will come to take vengeance on those who do not know God and have not obeyed the Gospel. At that time all the dead will be resurrected, both the righteous and the wicked (John 5:28,29). The heavens and the earth and all things therein shall be destroyed and will melt with fervent heat (2 Peter 3:10). The judgment will take place and the righteous will be saved forever with the Lord in heaven, but the wicked shall be cast into everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46).

Christ said while He was still with His disciples, ***"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know"*** (John 14:1-4).

Are you a Christian? If not, then you are not prepared to meet the Lord. I ask that you consider seriously your soul, and where it will spend eternity. Become a Christian, a child of God, a member of the Lord's church, so you can live for the Lord and prepare to meet Him when He returns. If you will believe in Him, repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized, then the Lord will save you, and add you to His church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). How simple and easy, if you really want to be saved and to go to heaven.

The Lord is coming again. Will you be ready to meet Him?